THE BIBLE OF BOXING

The RING

★ MUHAMMAD ALI POSTER INSIDE

"SHE'S GOT POWER, SHE'S AGGRESSIVE, SHE'S NOT LOOKING FOR JUDGES FILLING OUT EVERY ROUND ON THEIR SCORECARDS. SHE'S IN THERE TO KNOCK PEOPLE OUT."

ANDRE WILL BE ANDRE

WARD IS A WINNER, NOT AN ENTERTAINER

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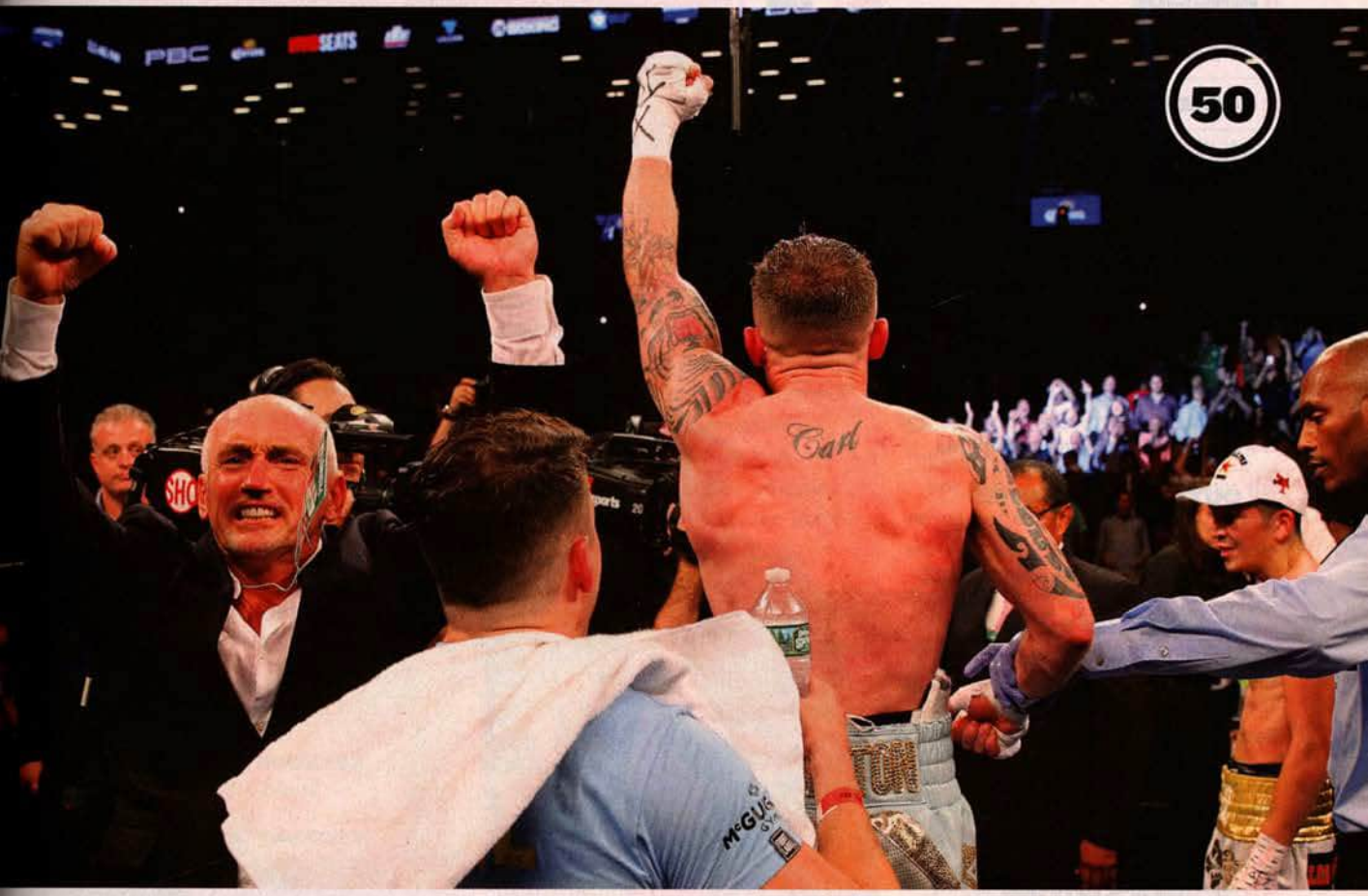

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Carl Frampton and manager Barry McGuigan (left) experience the joy of victory.

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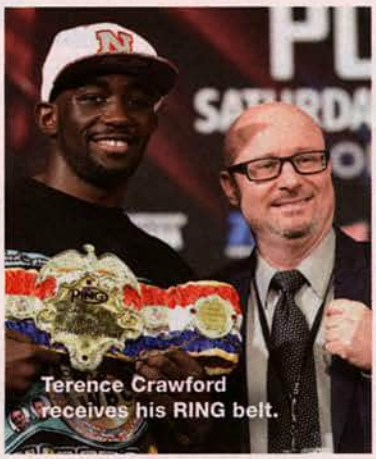
THE SILVER LINING

Sometimes it's difficult to remain a fan of boxing.

We're fed mediocre matchups when great ones can be made. The boxers, their handlers and network officials will say anything to sell their fights, the truth be damned. And even some fans can be insufferable. An utter lack of civility – including racism, homophobia, etc. – has driven me away from comments sections on the internet.

In other words, it seems the bulls--- just never stops flowing.

And then, just when you're starting to feel that all is lost, something real happens to restore your faith. Actually, I'm thinking of two recent championship fights that reminded me why I love this sport.



Terence Crawford receives his RING belt.

The first was Terence Crawford vs. Viktor Postol on July 23. I thought from the beginning that Crawford would win because of his speed but, on paper at least, this was a rare 50-50 fight between undefeated young stars.

Many of those charming trolls I mentioned described Crawford's performance as boring or lacking in some other way; I describe it as brilliant, a methodical, complete dismantling of a very good opponent. We all should savor such rare moments.

And, for me, it got better. I had the privilege of awarding Crawford a generic RING championship belt at the post-fight press conference, as another belt with his name engraved on it would be made later.

You should've seen the smile on Crawford's face when he saw it. So genuine, so joyful – even though it was his second RING belt.

And in the two weeks that followed his victory, I received a number of texts from his promoter's public relations man asking when the engraved belt would be finished and shipped to the new champ. Obviously Crawford was bugging him; he couldn't wait.

For Crawford, it wasn't about the money or even ego. It was simply the realization of a dream – to be awarded pretty belts – he has had since childhood, which validates what he does. No bulls--- whatsoever.

The second fight was Carl Frampton vs. Leo Santa Cruz a week later. The Irishman did something all too unusual these days: He followed the most challenging fight of his career (against Scott Quigg) with an even bigger challenge (against Santa Cruz) in his opponent's home country.

That's exactly what reasonable fans are clamoring for: good fighters risking it all against good fighters.

And Frampton beat Santa Cruz in a thrilling fight that met all expectations, winning by a majority decision. His reaction in the ring immediately after the result was announced wasn't unique but such a display of raw emotion (see the photo on Page 24) gets me every time.

Again, that type of moment isn't about money or ego or bulls--- or anything other than authentic joy that touches all of those who witness it. Cherish it.

Great matchups. Great fights. Great drama. That's all we want.

Ryoichi Taguchi (right) had more where this one came from as he easily outpointed Ryo Miyazaki to retain his WBA junior flyweight title Aug. 31 in Tokyo.

MAYWEATHER NO. 1

In your November 2016 issue, in "Living Legends," THE RING had Sugar Ray Leonard rated No. 1 and five other fighters ahead of Floyd Mayweather. I take absolutely nothing away from the great and distinguished Hall of Famer Leonard for all of his accomplishments, but to have Mayweather rated No. 7 is absurd. With the exception of his first fight with Jose Luis Castillo, Mayweather hasn't remotely come close to losing a fight. Not only does Mayweather beat his opponents, he dominates them. And I'm talking about current and future Hall of Famers. Mayweather is undefeated for a good reason. I know I'm in the minority in saying this but I think Mayweather is second only to the other Sugar Ray, that being Ray Robinson, as the greatest fighter of all time. Mayweather simply doesn't get the respect he deserves.

John Dundon
St. Louis

SOLID BUT ...

Your article on the greatest living boxers (November 2016) is solid but I bet I'm not the only one wondering where George Foreman and Bernard Hopkins are. Foreman is the only boxer in history to have two separate careers 10 years apart, capturing the world heavyweight title both times. And Hopkins is the oldest boxing champion of all time and only athlete to consistently defeat time. Roy Jones, the first man in a century to capture middleweight and heavyweight titles, and Thomas Hearns, first five-division champ who starched the No. 2 guy on your list in two rounds, are probably scratching their heads too. As is Joe Calzaghe, Britain's greatest fighter, who retired 46-0 after defeating Hopkins and Jones in one year.

Brad Morris
Astoria, N.Y.

DOWN GOES LAMOTTA

The report on Jake LaMotta (in "Living Legends") states that Jake never went down. I am an old fight fan of 75 who forgets things these days but it seems to me that I read years ago about Jake getting knocked down against Danny Nardico at the end of his career. I could be wrong.

Philip Alonzo
Gansevoort, N.Y.

Editor's note: You're right, Mr. Alonzo. Nardico put LaMotta down in the seventh round in 1952, the only time LaMotta hit the canvas. LaMotta's corner stopped the fight after that round. THE RING regrets the error.

CRAWFORD CLIMBING

Terence Crawford is one of the fastest rising stars in the sport. I know some critics and casual fans weren't so happy with his last outing. However, people need to remember that Viktor Postol is a talented former champion with an awkward style that is hard to look good against. Crawford was still able to box comfortably, score (two) knockdowns and cross the finish line with barely a mark on his face. You've got to give the man credit where credit is due. Can't wait to see what's next for the champ.

Davis Clouse
Omaha, Neb.

SPENCE 'THE TRUTH'

I know the reason Floyd Mayweather won't come out of retirement. And it's another junior. His name is Errol Spence. I've been watching boxing for 40 years and this guy is indeed the truth. The way that he moves around the ring and can throw combinations and still sit down on his punches while blocking almost every shot that comes his way is truly awesome.

Robert Maye
Ephratah, N.Y.

WOW FACTOR

I just have to say WOW! I found new respect for Carl Frampton. He displayed a lot of intelligence in his fight against Leo Santa Cruz. Frampton is short and had the shorter reach but timed his shots and landed them perfectly. He also stayed away from the end of Santa Cruz's reach, moving backward. Size didn't matter, nor did the Luck of the Irish in this fight. It was a great fight, made me nostalgic for when the featherweight division was the most exciting to watch. It's time to shine the light on the 122- and 126-pound fighters.

Errol Ian Ave Acosta
Twentynine Palms, Calif.

CANELO-GOLOVKIN

Ron Borges is a fine journalist, as are his colleagues at THE RING. But while Borges and others twisted themselves into pretzels trying to make sense of the Canelo Alvarez-Gennady Golovkin matter, Bernard Hopkins cut through the thickets with the decisive truth (see Ring IQ, November 2016). "Every name fighter has control over who they fight." The only conclusion regarding Canelo's going back on his word is that he does not want to fight GGG, period. In a mere page, Hopkins said more than boxing's best journalists said in several.

Bernard Freydberg
Slippery Rock, Pa.

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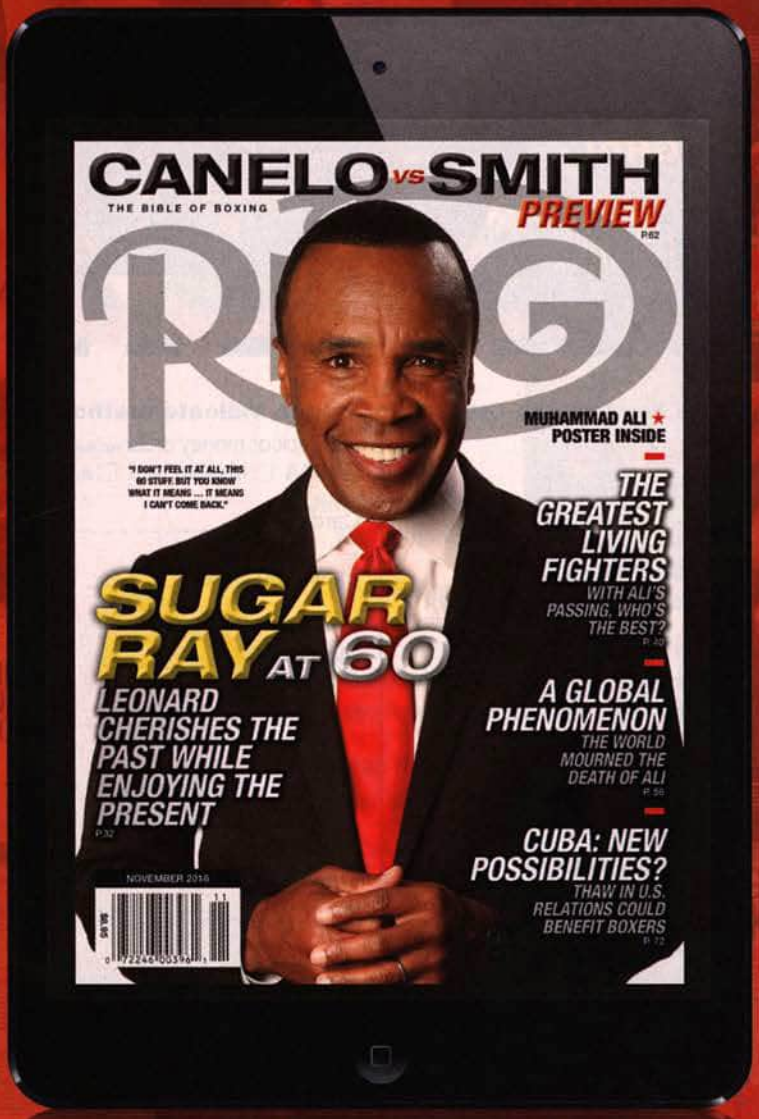

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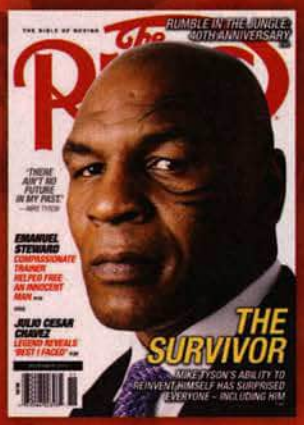

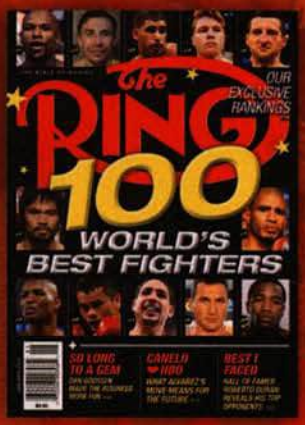

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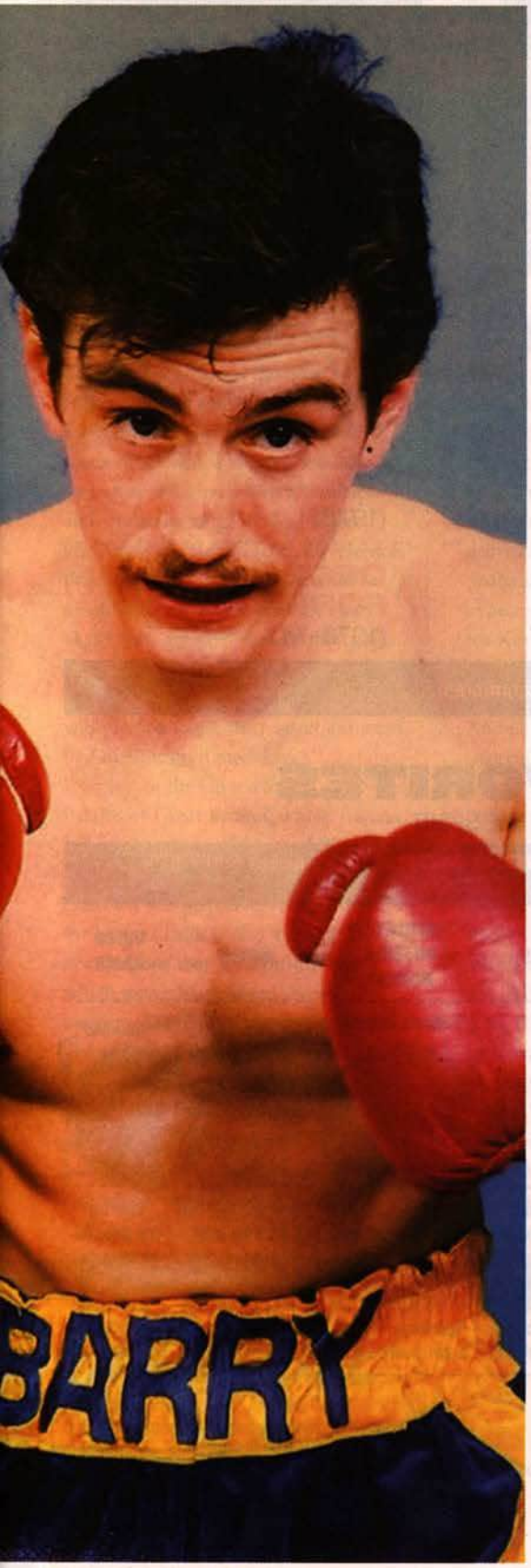
ADVANCED DEGREES



Degrees of separation between fighters of the past and their more contemporary counterparts. This month, regular contributor Gregg Morgan links new featherweight titleholder **Carl Frampton** with his manager, **Barry McGuigan**, in five steps. McGuigan last fought in 1989.

BARRY MCGUIGAN
fought

Jim McDonnell,
who fought

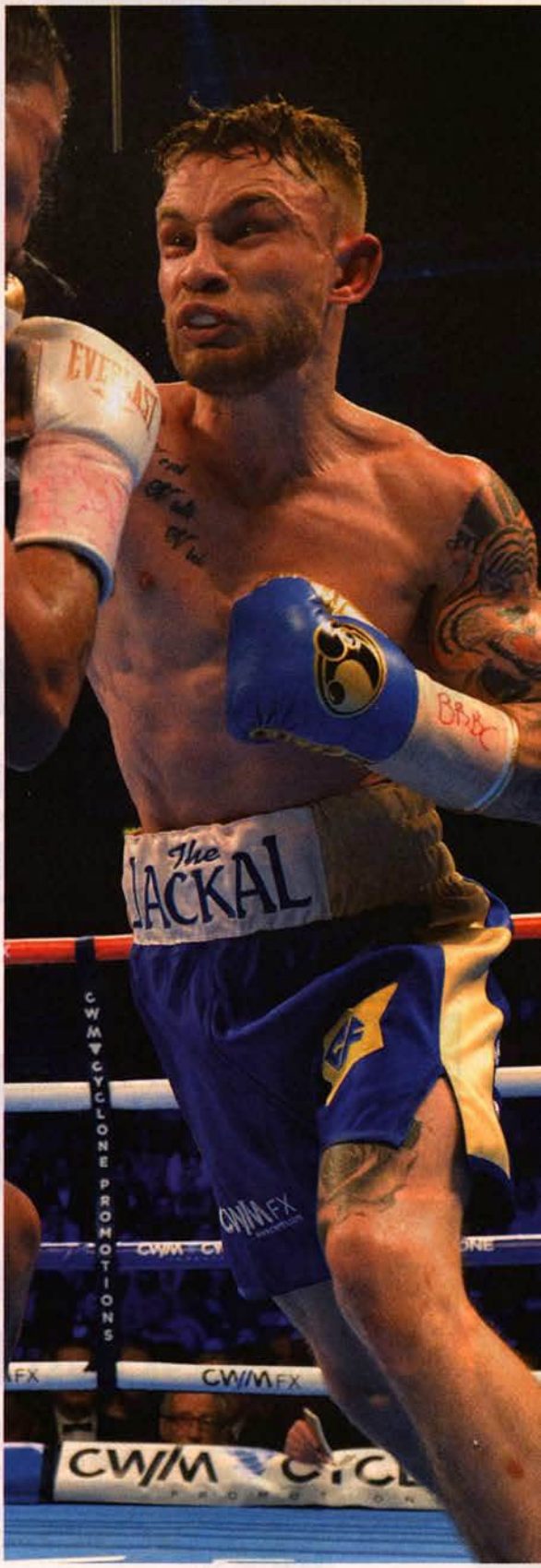
Peter Feher,
who fought

Devis Boschiero,
who fought

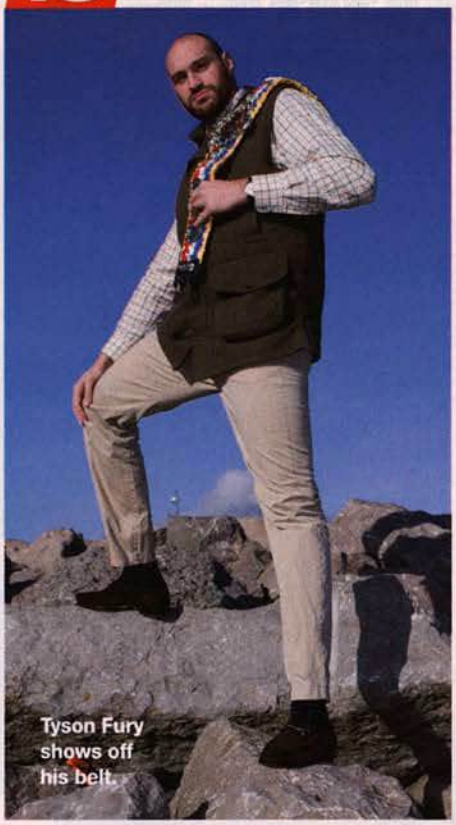
Ignac Kassi,
who fought

CARL FRAMPTON

Manager Barry McGuigan (left) and fighter Carl Frampton (right) are a formidable team.



10 A MONTHLY BOXING LIST


Tyson Fury shows off his belt.

This month: THE RING has had only 10 heavyweight champions in the past 43 years in part because it ceased crowning champions in the 1990s and then resumed the policy in 2002. Here are those 10 heavyweight champions.

« **TYSON FURY** (2015-current)

WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO (2009-15)

VITALI KLITSCHKO (2004-05)

LENNOX LEWIS (2002-04)

MIKE TYSON (1988-90*)

MICHAEL SPINKS (1985-88)

LARRY HOLMES (1980-85)

MUHAMMAD ALI (1978-79, 1974-78)

LEON SPINKS (1978)

GEORGE FOREMAN (1973-74)

*–Championship policy discontinued.

FIGHTERS' FAVORITES

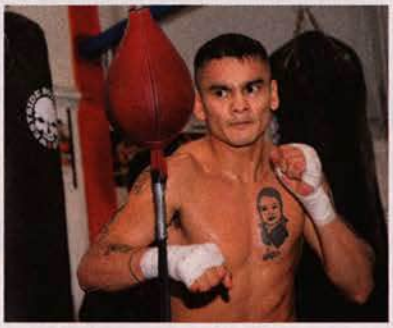
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ WHAT BOXERS ARE INTO OUTSIDE THE SPORT ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

1. JOSEPH PARKER HEAVYWEIGHT CONTENDER / **2. SERGIO MORA** MIDDLEWEIGHT CONTENDER / **3. HUGO RUIZ** WBC JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER

FIGHTER	MUSIC	CAR	FOOD	TATTOOS	ATHLETE OUTSIDE BOXING	MOVIE	VIDEO GAME
1.	"Kendrick Lamar. Hip-hop, R&B and rap."	"Chrysler 500. **Range Rover.**"	"Seafood."	"No."	**"LeBron James."**	"'Blood In, Blood Out.'"	**"'Tekken.'"**
2.	"I love all types of music but I train to R&B. I love Stevie Wonder. I like to train to smooth music. I like hip-hop, I like rock – I love Led Zeppelin and The Rolling Stones."	"I drive a Jeep, the car I won on 'The Contender,' and an Infiniti M45. I'm in the position to buy any car I want but I'm not a car guy. The things I invest in are shoes, belts and watches."	"I just started cooking myself. I love to cook anything that brings a lot of spice in it. I love Thai food and Mexican."	"I have no tattoos. I have three brothers and none of us have tattoos because my mom wouldn't allow it. So out of respect to her we never got tattoos."	"I don't really follows sports; I'm more into movies. I would say Kobe Bryant ... he's a fellow snake. He's the Black Mamba. I've got to support my fellow snakes!"	"I've got plenty. My all-time favorite is 'The Hustler' with Paul Newman. 'Scent of a Woman' I loved, 'Casablanca,' 'Citizen Kane' – these are all great movies that stand the test of time."	"I don't play video games. The last video game I played was Street Fighter and that was on Super Nintendo."
3.	"Mexican singer **Vicente Fernandez.**"	"I drive a Honda Civic and my dream car is a Lamborghini."	**"Seafood."**	"No tattoos."	"Lionel Messi."	"'The Pursuit of Happyness' with Will Smith.'"	"'FIFA 2016.'"

— **Anson Wainwright**

THE BEST AND WORST IN BOXING FROM THE PAST MONTH By Michael Rosenthal



GOOD

I'll never forget what the great Lucia Rijker told me while she was still an active fighter. She said she was asked many times why a woman would want to endure the physical punishment endemic to boxing. She had a pat answer: "This is who I am, my essence. I'm a fighter." I got it. Women are as passionate and devoted to the sport as the men are even though they get a fraction of the recognition – and money – of their counterparts. That's why I was pleased to see the respect garnered by Olympic gold medalists **Claressa Shields** of the United States and Nicola Adams of Great Britain, whose success in both London in 2012 and Rio this past summer have made them significant figures. They earned it. The question for both of them is this, though: What's next? I hope they turn professional, which seems likely given the keen interest of several promoters who would like to handle their careers. I don't know whether they could help resurrect the days of Christy Martin and Laila Ali – when women's boxing peaked – but the gold medalists would definitely provide a much-needed shot in the arm.

BAD

This is a predicted "bad." I'm not the only one fascinated by the Nov. 19 **Sergey Kovalev-Andre Ward** fight. It's rare that Nos. 2 and 4 pound-for-pound step into the ring together, which is why the matchup will continue to generate hype. The problem is that it probably will fall flat, at least in terms of expectations. I have tremendous respect for Kovalev, who was THE RING Fighter of the Year for 2014, and has continued to dominate his opponents. And he has the kind of punching power that can change a fight in a violent instant. I just don't think he has the boxing skills to beat the gifted Ward, who has the unusual ability to neutralize his opponents in a tactical manner and eliminate any drama in the process. I think Kovalev's only chance is to hurt Ward, which certainly is possible but not likely given Ward's ring acumen. And, who knows, relentless pressure by Kovalev could force Ward to engage him. Again: possible but not likely. I suspect Kovalev-Ward will look similar to Kovalev-Isaac Chilemba, a boring fight. Only this time Kovalev will lose a unanimous decision. And fans will be disappointed once again.

WORSE

Marcos Maidana announced his retirement from boxing on Aug. 9, which is good for him (if he stays retired) but bad for boxing. Very few fighters could do what he did every time out: guarantee an entertaining fight. Can you think of a boring one involving the fearless, hard-punching Argentine? "El Chino" was already a legend in his home country – having started his career 25-0, with 24 knockouts – when he lost a split decision to Andreas Kotelnik in his first title fight in 2009. He was only getting started. His next fight instantly stamped him as one of the sport's true warriors, a five-knockdown brawl against Victor Ortiz that dazzled fans. He won some and lost some after that but never failed to entertain. And he saved his best for last. No one gave Maidana much of a chance against then-unbeaten Adrien Broner in December 2013 but Broner had to be helped out of the ring after losing a one-sided decision and his welterweight title. Maidana then did the impossible: He made back-to-back losses to Floyd Mayweather Jr. fun to watch with his wild, swarming style. That's the perfect word for Maidana – fun, unless you were fighting him.

RING POLL

A MONTHLY POLL OF OUR RINGTV.COM READERS

One of the most anticipated fights of the year pits two dominating – and undefeated – light heavyweights against one another on Nov. 19. With that in mind, we asked: **What will be the result of the Sergey Kovalev-Andre Ward fight?** Here is how you responded.

THE PERCENTAGES

47.54	WARD BY DECISION
28.99	KOVALEV BY KO
19.42	KOVALEV BY DECISION
2.60	WARD BY KO
1.45	DRAW

NOTE: 1,849 READERS VOTED

Kostya Tszyu was impressed by Vince Phillips' power and ability to take a punch.

KOSTYA TSZYU

31-2 (25 KOs)

One of the more remarkable journeys in recent years took Kostya Tszyu from an obscure mining town in central Russia to the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Tszyu was born to a Korean father and Russian mother in the city of Serov, in the eastern foothills of the Ural Mountains. He was 9 years old when he took up the sport that would make him a worldwide star.

He was a standout amateur for the Soviet Union, reportedly compiling a record of 259-11 and hitting his peak when he beat Vernon Forrest to win the junior welterweight gold medal at the 1991 World Championships in Australia.

Tszyu liked Sydney so much that

he emigrated there after the Soviet Union collapsed and made his pro debut on the undercard of Azumah Nelson-Jeff Fenech II in March 1992.

Before he was finished, Tszyu, who fought his entire career at 140 pounds, earned a reputation as one of the most dynamic – and successful – fighters of the 1990s and early 2000s.

"The Thunder from Down Under" didn't waste any time after turning pro. He challenged then-IBF junior welterweight titleholder Jake Rodriguez in only his 14th fight and emerged with a sixth-round knockout and his first belt.

Tszyu made four successful defenses of his title (plus one no-contest) and was in line to meet reigning superstar Oscar De La Hoya in a big money fight, but his rapid rise was derailed when, in a major upset, Vince Phillips stopped him in May 1997.

He wouldn't be defeated again until his final fight, in June 2005 – a loss to Ricky Hatton that ended a dominating eight-year run.

Tszyu rebounded from the Phillips loss by winning four consecutive fights to earn a shot at the vacant WBC title, which he won by stopping Miguel Angel Gonzalez in 10 rounds in August 1999. He would succeed in eight more title defenses, adding the RING, IBF and WBA titles along the way to become the undisputed 140-pound champion.

That stretch included knockouts of Julio Cesar Chavez, Sharmba Mitchell (twice), Zab Judah and Jesse James Leija.

Tszyu calls his performance against Gonzalez, which earned him THE RING's Comeback of the Year honors, the finest of his career.

"I did everything perfectly fine," he told THE RING. "I controlled the fight from the first second to the last second."

Tszyu (31-2, 25 knockouts) retired after the Hatton loss with a record of 14-2 in world title fights.

Today, Tszyu, who turned 47 on Sept. 19, lives in Moscow with his second wife and their young son. He has three children from his first marriage. He briefly trained fighters but is now focused on his business interests, including a restaurant.

"I'm enjoying my life," he said. "Honestly, I'm trying to do nothing (but) it doesn't work (laughs). I'm busy every single day."

He agreed to speak about the best fighters he fought in 10 categories.

BEST JAB

Miguel Angel Gonzalez: None of them really used the jab as much as they're supposed to. Gonzalez, because it took me some time to be able to go through the jab to finally stop him.

BEST DEFENSE

Livingstone Bramble: Early in my career against Juan Laporte, he had a very good defense. I wasn't able to go through his defense. Livingstone Bramble had a very good defense against me.

BEST CHIN

Vince Phillips: I think Vince Phillips. He had been rocked by Ike Quartey but against me I couldn't put him down. I think Gonzalez had a very good chin; he took huge punishment and never quit.

FASTEST HANDS

Zab Judah: I think Zab was a good, fast puncher. He made a mistake and I capitalized on it.

FASTEST FEET

Sharmba Mitchell: I think Sharmba Mitchell was a good mover. He was awkward in the first fight (but) I was able to find the rhythm for myself and a way to cut the corners properly.

SMARTEST

Ricky Hatton: The way he fought, I think Ricky Hatton. Ricky had the best plan, he created a good plan ... to wrestle me (laughs). I wasn't really able to wrestle myself the way I'm supposed to. Good plan, good tactics and that's the reason why I lost the fight.

STRONGEST

Hatton: Probably be Ricky, he was a strong guy. I never looked for any excuse after the fight but I made a few mistakes against Ricky in terms of my physical condition. Fighting him at 2 a.m. in the morning ... normally I sleep at this time. Unfortunately, I made the mistake of leaving too late. I arrived two weeks before the fight – enough time but I didn't adjust to the time. I changed the time zone twice, the first time by traveling to the U.K. And secondly, (I was) not able to train at the night time to prepare my body for the night, not sleeping. My body was sleeping. I felt my adrenaline would help me but my experience went against me because I didn't have any adrenaline in the fight.

BEST PUNCHER

Phillips: Probably Vince Phillips. It wasn't my best night but I felt his punches. It's not an excuse but I wasn't in the best shape of my career against Vince Phillips. I was ill, I had anemia. ... I felt every punch he threw. In a normal situation, I thought there wouldn't be any problem with (beating Phillips).

BEST SKILLS

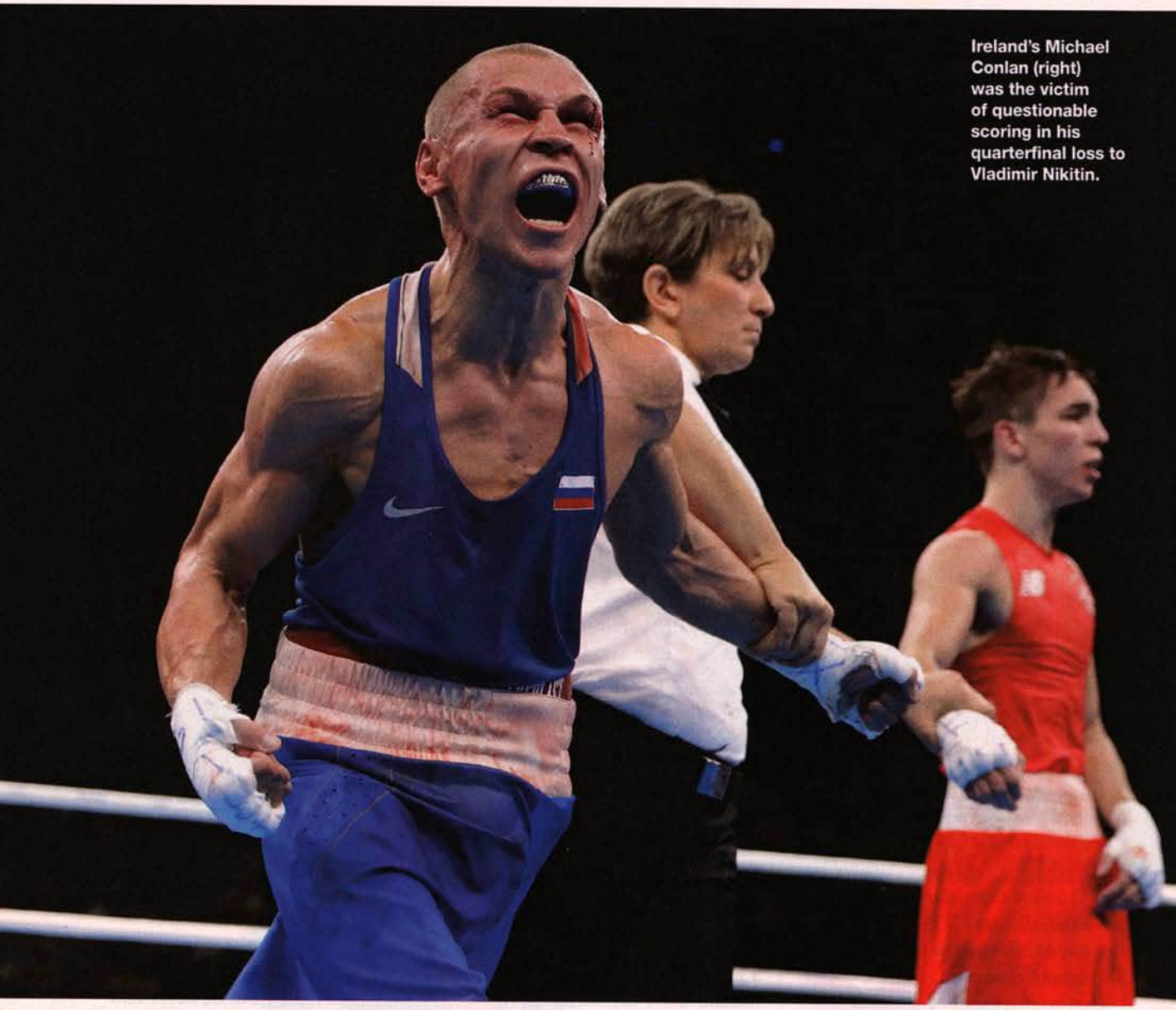
Judah: Sharmba was a very intelligent fighter. Zab was a very talented fighter but he never had discipline that he should have.

BEST OVERALL

Julio Cesar Chavez: He's the huge legend in my eyes and I fought him in not his best condition but again that's not an excuse for me or him. I fought in not the best condition against Ricky. I never thought I was gonna lose to him. At the same time Chavez wanted desperately to be a champion again but at that time no one could stop me on that day.

Anson Wainwright can be reached at elraincoat@live.co.uk. Follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

By David Greisman



Ireland's Michael Conlan (right) was the victim of questionable scoring in his quarterfinal loss to Vladimir Nikitin.

DIFFERENT SYSTEM, SAME SAD RESULT

PRO-STYLE SCORING IN **THE OLYMPICS** DID NOTHING TO PRECLUDE CONTROVERSY

For the first time in decades, the amateur boxing at the Olympics was supposed to be along the lines of what you see in the pros. It was, in good ways and bad.

Just like in the pros, there was no headgear and fights were scored on a round-by-round basis, rather than relying on a ridiculous system in which boxers were rewarded for every landed punch.

That system turned fighting into fencing. You didn't have to hit your opponent hard. You just had to hit

him. Except even then, you had to hit him and then hope that at least three of the five judges saw the shot land and hit a button to credit it.

This technology was meant to prevent corruption, such as the judges who robbed Roy Jones Jr. in 1988. But the use of computers didn't mean the users were competent. A system built on technology was beset by human error, at the bare minimum. Scoring at times still wasn't objective. It was objectionable.

For the 2016 Games, the tech was removed but the hacks remained. Aesthetically, it was better. But pathetically, there was more of the same.

Just like the pros – and as had remained the case in amateur boxing – there were still scorecards where the boxer who appeared to have lost a round instead won it, with that pattern repeating until he won unanimously yet undeservingly. He would have the winning sum, yet, figuratively speaking, the numbers didn't add up.

Close fights can be controversial without being criminal. Not all of the outcry followed close fights. Some of these cards were just despicable, scoring that tends to suggest issues with competence or corruption. These judges either had no idea what they were doing or were fully aware of what they were doing.

AIBA, which regulates amateur boxing worldwide, responded to the controversy by acknowledging that there were problems and a solution but not clarifying exactly what those were.

It announced that referees and judges had been sent home mid-tournament but refused to say which referees and judges (and why), as well as which fights had been seen as troublesome during their review (and why). Some of the judges who had turned in highly controversial scores were allowed to continue working, which called into question just how effective the review had been in the first place. It was bad enough that the organization's executive director was reassigned in the middle of the Olympics. Yet it apparently wasn't bad enough for results to be overturned.

All the while, AIBA insisted it "remains committed to a fair and transparent sport."

Just like the pros, a sanctioning body is simultaneously able to make empty promises but be full of it.

★★★

This also was the first time in which pro boxers could compete in the Olympics. Very few left the realm of riches in order to go for the gold.

In fact, there were only a few: former middleweight titleholder Hassan N'Dam, now essentially a fringe contender; former flyweight titleholder Amnat Ruenroeng, just coming off being demolished and dethroned; and lightweight prospect Carmine Tommasone, unbeaten but otherwise undistinguished.

There were only a few because the amateur and professional sanctioning bodies worked against each other. AIBA had previously said in 2013 that it would allow pros only if they had fewer than 15 fights and were signed with its professional organization. But this June it opened the doors to any pros — barely a month before a qualifying tournament for a limited number of remaining spots.

By then, many fighters were in the process of scheduling out the remainder of the year. A couple of the pro sanctioning bodies had said they would punish boxers who decided to try out for the Olympics, taking them out of their rankings or taking away their titles. Other countries already had their teams set and either couldn't change their rules or wouldn't want to deprive their young amateurs, in whom they had invested.

Many critics said it was dangerous to put amateurs in with seasoned pros. That turned out not to be the case. The Olympics didn't get pros who were the cream of the crop. They got pros who got creamed.

Part of that was the weight. In the pros, a majority of fighters will drain themselves to get on the scales and then have ample time to rehydrate. In the amateurs, boxers need to be at or near weight throughout the tournament. The pros instead competed outside of their ideal division. N'Dam came in at light heavyweight and went out in his first fight. Ruenroeng and Tommasone both competed at lightweight, won once apiece and then were sent packing by eventual medalists.

It may have been dangerous had a pro heavyweight, unworried about stepping on a scale, stepped in against amateur super heavyweights. Or perhaps those fit pros who walk around close to their fighting weight could have walked over their less experienced opponents.

None of that happened. The most offensive thing about the idea wound up being the timing of it — not that it came too late for pros to make a decision about competing alongside amateurs but that it came too late for longtime amateurs to make a different choice. Some may have opted to leave for the paid ranks years earlier had they known they potentially no longer would go head to head against their peers but could be in over their heads against pros.

The pros who stayed away were wise. Some of the amateurs should've done the same. If you're going to get robbed, after all, you might as well get paid for the displeasure.

WBC President Mauricio Sulaiman seems earnest in his efforts to rid boxing of PEDs.

MOVING FORWARD

WBC'S DRUG TESTING PROGRAM COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE ... IF IT HAPPENS

On June 3, 2014, I had a conversation with Mauricio Sulaiman, who, several months earlier, had succeeded his father as president of the World Boxing Council. Sulaiman told me he intended to introduce a testing program that would require all WBC champions and fighters ranked by the organization in the Top 15 to submit to PED testing by the Voluntary Anti-Doping Agency (VADA) on a year-round basis. A champion who refused to be tested would be stripped of his title. Contenders who refused would be removed from the rankings.

VADA is run by Dr. Margaret Goodman, who served previously as chief ringside physician and chairwoman of the medical advisory board for the Nevada State Athletic Commission. It's the most credible of the entities that test for the use of illegal performance enhancing drugs in boxing today.

My response to Sulaiman reflected my skepticism: "It would be great if you did it but I don't think you will. Whatever drug-testing program you put in place will have loopholes because the WBC won't give up the sanctioning fees that elite fighters engender."

"We will do it," Mauricio assured me.

"If you do, I'll sing your praises to the sky."

There have been jiggles and bumps along the way but, on July 1, the WBC sent out an advisory that reads as follows:

"To all promoters, managers, trainers and boxers ... The WBC announced the official registration period for the Clean Boxing Program on May 5 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Every champion and any top-15-rated fighter in the WBC is eligible for out-of-competition and in-competition random testing. The Voluntary Anti-Doping Association (VADA) is responsible to administer the program, including the system, which randomly selects eligible boxers for collection of samples. This section of the Clean Boxing Program, which is random testing, has no cost to the boxer, their representatives or anyone else, as it is paid in full by the Clean Boxing Program. All eligible fighters must submit their paperwork to enroll in the program immediately, as the 90-day grace period will expire Aug. 9, 2016. Any fighter who is not enrolled in the Clean Boxing Program will be removed from the WBC ratings."

Thereafter, the WBC extended the enrollment deadline by 30 days to accommodate late submissions.

Will the WBC really enforce its newly announced PED-testing program and sanction elite fighters who refuse to submit to random testing?

I hope that, in the near future, I have occasion to sing Mauricio Sulaiman's praises to the sky.

★★★

Recent negotiations for the fight between Canelo Alvarez and Gennady Golovkin highlighted some of the idiocies that undermine boxing today.

Golovkin, as of this writing, is the IBF, WBA and WBC middleweight titleholder, having

been recently elevated by the WBC from its "interim world middleweight champion" throne.

Alvarez is the former WBC and current RING and lineal world middleweight champion despite the fact that he never fought a fight in which the contract weight was 160 pounds.

It's a given that boxing has too many champions. But the Alvarez-Golovkin negotiations put the spotlight on another problem: Fighters with economic leverage now often use their clout to gain an unfair competitive edge through the imposition of catchweights.

I have no problem with fighters agreeing to fight at whatever weight they choose when a championship isn't at stake. Last year, Danny Garcia and Lamont Peterson contracted to face each other at 143 pounds despite the fact that each man held a 140-pound belt. That's OK. There was no title at stake and both men were comfortable at the weight.

But in recent years, Floyd Mayweather Jr., Manny Pacquiao, Oscar De La Hoya, Miguel Cotto and others have imposed strength-draining catchweights on opponents in so-called "championship" fights. The world sanctioning organizations have been reluctant to end the practice because they want the sanctioning fees that elite fighters contribute to their coffers. And state athletic commissions have no say in the matter because they regulate fights, not belts.

Alvarez himself was the victim of a catchweight squeeze when he challenged Mayweather for a 154-pound belt while not being allowed to weigh-in above 152 pounds. Then Canelo sought to impose a similar inequity on Golovkin. More specifically, he said that he would only defend his 160-pound title if Gennady agreed to weigh in at 155 pounds.

If a fight is for a championship, both fighters should be permitted to weigh in at the maximum weight allowable in that division.

★★★

Notes on a telephone conversation with promoter Don Elbaum:

Don Elbaum: You're not going to believe this.

TH: Since I'm talking with you, that's probably true.

Elbaum: No, you gotta listen to me on this one. It's a great story and you're the first guy I'm calling. You're the only one who can write this the way it should be written.

TH: In other words, Dan Rafael, Ron Borges, Mike Rosenthal and Norm Frauenheim all turned you down.

Elbaum: Don't be a wise guy. This is a great, great story and I'm offering it to you first. I got a heavyweight. He used to be a banker. His name is Jeremiah Williams. I'm promoting a card in Flint, Michigan, on August 20th to help with the water situation there, and Jeremiah will be on the card. He's a great guy, 37 years old, used to play football at Wake Forest. His record is 2-and-7, which isn't so good. But here's the thing. Jeremiah looks exactly like O.J. Simpson. He could be O.J. Simpson's identical twin. If you could get O.J. Simpson out of prison, put him in a time machine, and make him 37 years old again, he'd look exactly like Jeremiah.

TH: Don, I'm looking at Boxrec.com as we speak. Jeremiah isn't 37. He's 44. And his record is 2-and-9.

Elbaum: But he's won two of his last three fights.

TH: Yeah. And the wins were against guys with a composite ring record of zero wins and 11 losses at the time he fought them.

Elbaum: You know something? That's a problem you have. You always let details get in the way of a good story.

TH: Like the time you told me you had a 7-foot fighter from Bosnia who turned out to be 6-6.

Elbaum: There was an explanation for that. He was short for his height. Besides, I made up for it when I brought Nikolay Valuev to Atlantic City.

TH: For all I know, Jeremiah Williams looks like Stephen Curry.

Elbaum: If he did, I'd say so. That would be an even better story. Look, let me put Jeremiah on the phone. He's a great guy.

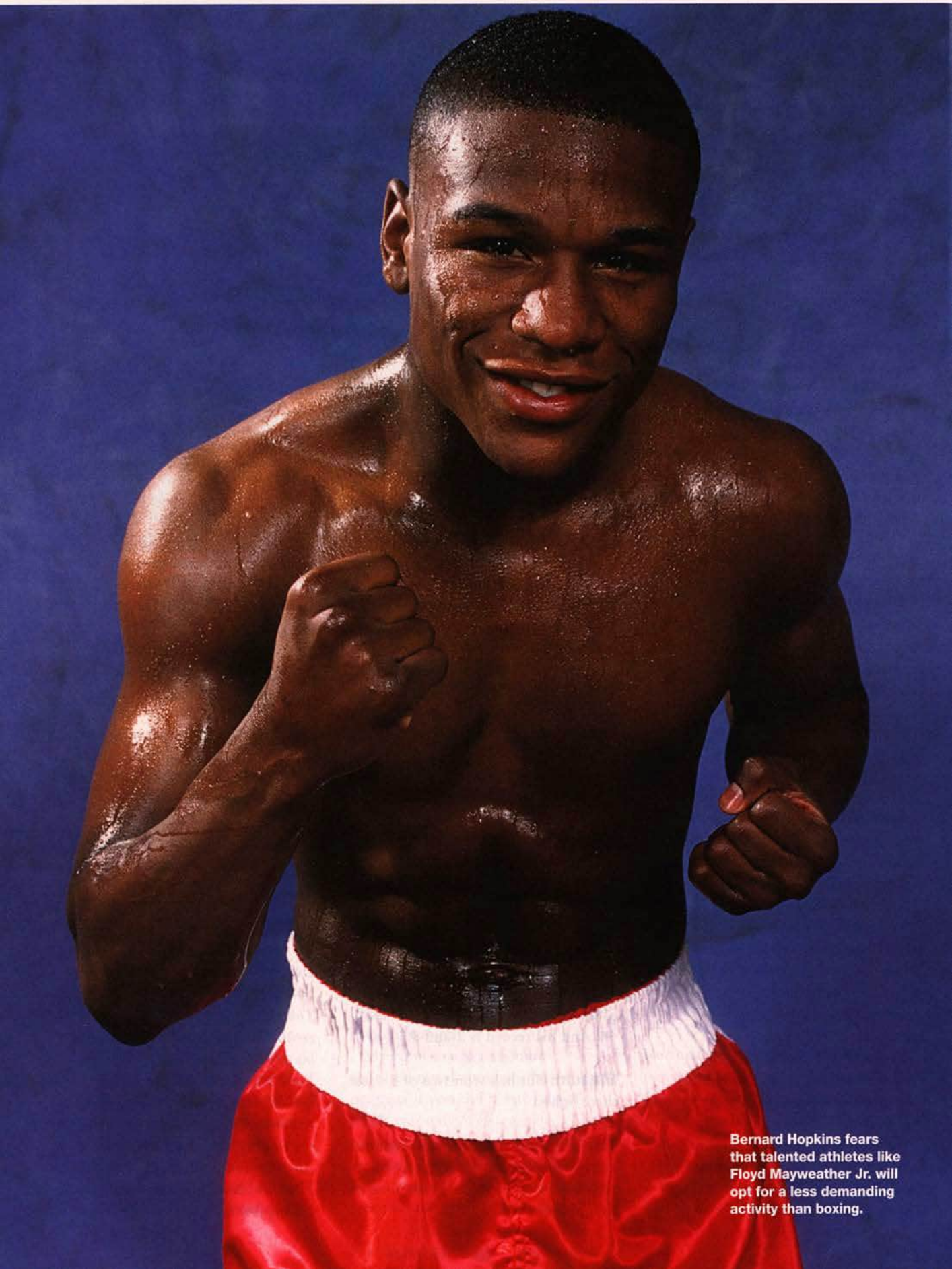
So Don put Jeremiah on the phone. He seems like a really good guy, articulate, friendly. He had a promising freshman year in 1991 as a running back at Wake Forest. Four touchdowns and 523 yards on 139 carries. Then his production trailed off. He graduated in 1995.

I asked Jeremiah to email me a photo. He did, at which point I called Elbaum back.

TH: Don, there is a resemblance. But Jeremiah doesn't look like O.J. Simpson's identical twin brother.

Elbaum: You know something? I've been thinking about it and you're right. But people stop Jeremiah on the street all the time, thinking he's Dwayne Johnson.

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His next book – "A Hard World: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing" – will be published by the University of Arkansas Press in September. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.



Bernard Hopkins fears that talented athletes like Floyd Mayweather Jr. will opt for a less demanding activity than boxing.

BOXING IS LOSING BLACK KIDS

YOUNG AFRICAN-AMERICANS SET THEIR SIGHTS ON RAPPING OR BALLING, NOT THE SWEET SCIENCE, AND THAT PROBABLY WON'T CHANGE

This is one in a series of columns by future Hall of Famer Bernard Hopkins, who gives us his thoughts on various subjects important to every boxer and fan. This issue: Relatively few African-American kids are going into boxing.

There is a fact today that people don't like to talk about or deal with. It's that we're losing the young black kids who once filled inner-city boxing gyms. Look out at the boxing landscape today and what you see emerging are Eastern European and Russian fighters. Why? Because they're hungry and they have access to gyms and training.

A big part of the reason boxing doesn't attract young American black kids is because the PAL (Police Athletic League) organizations are closing in big cities. The other is insurance risks and parents, especially moms, who see the risk their kids take with boxing, such as concussions. They see what getting hit in the head possibly can do to you later in life. They see it happening in football. That's why you're seeing fewer kids playing football, and boxing is right behind.

It was tough getting kids to box in the first place. Now they're faced with these other obstacles.

So I'm going to just come right out and say it: We'll never see multiple African-American superstar fighters after this current generation. Black kids just don't want to box anymore. And it's not just black kids, it's American kids in general.

Boxing is a tough sport to get involved with. You're not only getting punched, which no one likes, you're talking about working hard toward becoming a champion or maybe an Olympic gold medalist. That takes time. It takes commitment. I don't know if today's kids are willing to put in that time and commitment anymore. Kids today are soft.

The heavyweight champion of the world today is playing in the NFL or NBA. Kids see kids like them who are 19, 20, 21, just out of college, going to the NBA, playing in the NFL making serious money. No kid wants to put serious effort and hours into fighting for $1,000 at some local fight.

Inner-city kids are looking for instant gratification. They want to be rappers. They would have to worry only about being in a studio and rapping a few bars and not worrying about their weight. Or they want to play football or basketball. Go to any inner-city area in America and ask young black teenagers if they would rather be a boxer or be a baller. I'll guarantee most, if not all, will tell you a baller. Who would these kids really rather be, a fighter or the next LeBron James, a fighter or the next Jay Z?

Can anything be done to change what I see as a trend?

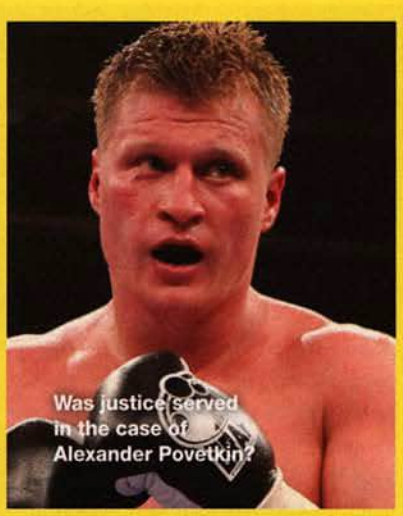
I don't think anything can be done when it comes to getting black kids to box again. What I do think can be done is to tie boxing to fitness. How I help boxing and what I feel is good for the boxing brand is telling parents and coaches that boxing is a great way to get in shape and stay in shape. It's a great way to introduce kids to boxing. It gives kids discipline. It works great, believe it or not, with business people.

I don't try to convince kids they're going to be the next Muhammad Ali or next Sugar Ray Leonard or next Roy Jones or next Floyd Mayweather or even the next Bernard Hopkins. But if they like hitting the heavy bag and the speed bag and they embrace the discipline that boxing requires, it might grow from there. They build a love for the sport organically, where it's not forced down their throats. All of the things you need in boxing you need in life.

If you can start that way and get three, four, five kids from that, it's a start. Because today's kids are lazy. I don't see them working like Floyd Mayweather or Roy Jones or Bernard Hopkins. I don't see kids today wanting to go beyond being just good. This is what I'm seeing with the kids I interact with.

American kids have too many distractions to place their focus on boxing. And regrettably, it will never be back, like back in the day – and I'm talking about 15, 20 years ago. Step into a gym and it's not so crowded that you have to hug the walls to find a place to train. It's not like that at inner-city gyms anymore. The kids in the hood, they're losing that tradition of great African-American fighters.

It makes me sad that it's a torch not being passed anymore. I'm never one to say never, but this is one I have to say, "Never in my lifetime."



REWARDED, NOT PUNISHED

The WBC finally ruled on **Alexander Povetkin's** positive drug test for the banned substance meldonium. And the heavyweight contender emerged largely unscathed.

The WBC announced on Aug. 17 that it would not suspend Povetkin, which wasn't a surprise. The sanctioning body is requiring him to enter a rigorous drug-testing program over the next 12 months after citing only traces of the drug in his system and uncertainty about whether he took the substance after it was formally banned on Jan. 1.

The WBC also will allow Povetkin to face **Bermane Stiverne** for its interim heavyweight title in what is shaping up to be an eliminator for the right to face WBC titleholder **Deontay Wilder**, a puzzling reward after a failed drug test. Povetkin has remained the WBC's No. 1 contender during its investigation.

Wilder, whose title defense against Povetkin was scuttled by the positive test, wants to fight the Russian but was incredulous that Povetkin was given the opportunity to fight Stiverne rather than being punished.

Wilder can ask with justification: Was justice served in the WBC's decision?

It seems everyone wants a piece of UFC champion **Conor McGregor**. That includes **Floyd Mayweather Sr.**, who hasn't fought since 1990. Mayweather says he could beat both McGregor and **Nate Diaz**, who is 1-1 against McGregor. "Look, I'd whoop Conor McGregor's ass and I'd whoop the boy who whooped Conor's ass," Mayweather said in a Mayweather Boxing Channel video. "If they do everything with their hands – with no kicking and no elbowing – I would beat both their asses. ... What I'm trying to tell you is that if there isn't any foot-swiping, no elbowing, or no chin-up ... I'm letting you know, if we ain't doing any of that, you already know who's gonna win. Look, I am the best. I must confess. For all the rest, there's no contest. I will shock your mind. I'm one of a kind. I'm one of the greatest fighters of all time." Uh, OK.

The tortured negotiations for the rematch between Tyson Fury and **Wladimir Klitschko** set for Oct. 29 in Manchester, England, took another awkward turn when Klitschko posted on social media on Aug. 17 that he planned to take Fury to court for allegedly violating the contractual terms of their rematch. So while the first fight was a bore, at least the run-up to the rematch has had more sharp turns than a busy Manhattan intersection at rush hour.

Adrien Broner left jail on Aug. 17 after a 30-day sentence for showing up late to his own hearing on July 19 on charges of felonious assault and aggravated robbery stemming from a Jan. 21 incident outside a Cincinnati bowling alley. He was scheduled to have a Sept. 21 court date for his new hearing. Broner looked ill and unkempt when he arrived to court in July, prompting the judge to suggest he was hungover, according to the Cincinnati Enquirer.

Premier Boxing Champions found a way to ensure high ratings for one of its broadcasts: Schedule it after a basketball game featuring some of the top NBA players on the planet. **Errol Spence Jr.'s** six-round beatdown of **Leonard Bundu** in a world title eliminator on Aug. 21 drew an average audience of 4.8 million viewers, the largest PBC broadcast ever. The Olympic gold-medal men's basketball game between the U.S. and Serbia, won by the U.S., preceded the telecast.

Wilder had surgeries to repair his broken right hand and torn right biceps following his July 16 victory over **Chris Arreola.** We know Wilder had the procedures because he took to social media, sometimes in a drowsy state, to announce that he just had successful surgery. The WBC heavyweight champion's handlers say he will be out until the end of the year or January at the latest.

Bobby Chacon: 1951-2016

Bobby Chacon, one of the most exciting fighters of all time, died on Sept. 7, as this issue of the RING was going to press. He was 64.

Chacon reportedly fell and struck his head at a care facility in Hemet, California, where he lived, and succumbed to his injuries. He had suffered from dementia for many years.

"School Boy" was in the RING Fight of the Year in back-to-back years, against Bazooka Limon and Cornelius Boza-Edwards in 1982 and 1983, but his free-swinging style produced many thrilling fights in his 16-year career.

The two-division world titleholder was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2005.

A full report will run in the January 2017 issue.

BOXING IN N.Y.: A MURKY FUTURE

COULD NEW INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS DRIVE THE SPORT AWAY?

The future of boxing in New York may have been decided in a 10-minute hearing in lower Manhattan.

There, in the offices of the New York Department of State, New York State Athletic Commission officials unanimously agreed on Aug. 31 to adopt new health insurance measures that most promoters predict will harm boxing in the state and slash the number of shows there.

The promoters were nearly apoplectic before the vote but seemed almost subdued and resigned to their fate afterward.

The approved regulations were part of the bill to legalize mixed martial arts in New York and included a measure to increase health insurance costs for combat sports from $10,000 to $50,000 for basic medical coverage. The commission also approved $1 million coverage for serious head injuries, which promoters say isn't feasible. Promoters were waiting at our press time to learn what type of policy is offered from an insurance company willing to underwrite the new coverage.

New York-based promoter Lou DiBella feels that even if insurance can be found, the new regulations will make it difficult to stage shows in the state, especially for smaller promoters.

"It's going to have a big, chilling effect for boxing in New York," DiBella told THE RING. "It's going to chase a certain level of promotion away and a certain level of promoter away. No one's going to do a big show until they can get insurance but smaller promoters in New York State that do smaller shows are going to be put out of business and boxers who are trying to establish their careers are going to be in trouble."

No fights at Madison Square Garden? Unthinkable.

Following the Aug. 31 meeting, representatives of two of New York's biggest promoters, attorney Alex Dombroff of DiBella Entertainment and matchmaker Ron Katz of Joe DeGuardia's Star Boxing, sat down with a number of officials from the NYSAC to express their concern with the insurance spike.

They talked about a dearth of shows on the commission calendar for the remainder of 2016. They also expressed their intention to start promoting out of state because of the insurance costs. The commission apparently does have the discretion to alter the health insurance measures as they see fit. Katz was optimistic after meeting with Anthony Giardina (new interim executive director), Eric Bentley (director of boxing) and Jim Leary (general counsel of the New York Department of State).

"They're very proactive and they want to resolve this because obviously they want activity," Katz said. "They're aware of everything and they've put in many hours to try and make this work. They're trying their best to resolve this. That's the feeling I got. We're all hopeful that things work out. It has to be. Otherwise, everyone has to move their base of operations out of New York."

A source told THE RING they feared Bentley, who has a background in boxing, could be leaving the commission after being demoted from executive director to director of boxing and they grumbled about the ascension of Giardina, a former executive deputy secretary of state.

"Everybody in the industry expects (Bentley) to go after he was demoted in favor of people that know nothing," the source said.

The Department of State acknowledged the controversy surrounding the health insurance regulations in a statement after the measures were approved.

"While some combative sports industry professionals expressed concern over the premiums for the $1 million coverage, these amounts are (not) as yet determined," the statement said. "However, from discussions with insurers about to enter the market, we believe the costs will be reasonable. Ultimately, the frequency and severity of life-threatening brain injuries incurred in New York State will drive the premiums. NYSAC believes the best way to keep premiums down is to keep injuries to a minimum."

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

CARL FRAMPTON

By **Michael Rosenthal**

Carl Frampton's victory over Leo Santa Cruz was his breakthrough performance.

Leo Santa Cruz seemed to have a size advantage going into his featherweight showdown with Carl Frampton on July 30 in Brooklyn, as Frampton was moving up in weight. That and Santa Cruz's swarming style, many believed, would be too much for the Irishman.

Those "experts" failed to consider two things: Frampton had great difficulty making the junior featherweight limit. And, more important, they underestimated his special talent.

Santa Cruz did his thing, throwing more than 1,000 punches, but the faster, more athletic and more gifted Frampton fought very well defensively (Santa Cruz had a low, 25 percent connect rate) and landed the cleaner punches, which allowed him to win a majority decision and Santa Cruz's WBA title.

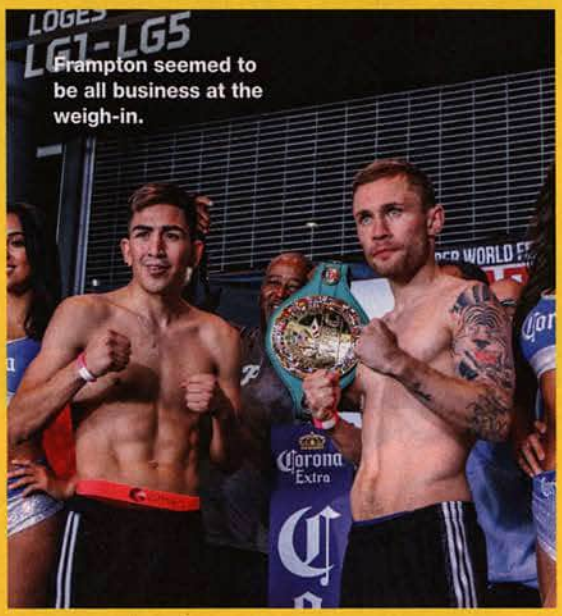
Two judges scored it for Frampton (117-111 and 116-112) while the third had it a draw (114-114).

It would be a stretch to say that Frampton had his way with Santa Cruz but he controlled the fight from beginning to end. And that's saying something given the ability of Santa Cruz, one of the more respected boxers worldwide.

"It's a dream come true," Frampton said in the ring afterward. "I had the dream of winning a world title and I won it, but I never thought I'd win in two divisions. It was a tough fight. I wanted it to be a tough fight because I wanted a fight the people could remember. I respect him a lot. He was a true warrior."

The payoff for Frampton is more respect. He not only won a belt in a second division, he also entered THE RING's pound-for-pound list. And, still only 29, he's just getting started.

AMANDA WESTCOTT/SHOWTIME



Frampton seemed to be all business at the weigh-in.

POUND FOR POUND: Carl Frampton jumped onto the list at No. 10, replacing Naoya Inoue, after a masterful performance against Leo Santa Cruz (unrated in pound for pound). One judge scored it a draw but the other two got it right and the Irishman, who had recently unified two titles at 122 pounds, won a new belt in his first fight at featherweight.

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No change.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No change.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No change.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No change.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No change.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Frampton (No. 2 at junior featherweight last month) left his belts at 122 behind and replaced them with Santa Cruz's WBA title after winning a majority decision in Brooklyn. He also took the No. 2 position from Santa Cruz, who dropped to No. 4. The action at the top pushed everyone else down a notch but Joseph Diaz Jr. held his position at No. 9 after smashing Victor Proa (unrated) in two rounds. Satoshi Hosono (No. 8 last month) therefore fell two spots to No. 10, ousting Mexico's Jorge Lara.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Frampton's departure lifted everyone below Guillermo Rigondeaux (No. 1) up a notch and created a vacancy at No. 10 for undefeated Mexican Diego De La Hoya.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Marlon Tapales (No. 9 last month) scored a late knockout to snatch the WBO title from No. 8-rated Pungluang Sor Singyu. The latter dropped out, Tapales gained a spot and Luis Nery, having just stopped David Sanchez (unrated) in four rounds, came in at No. 10.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: In one very eventful week for the 115-pounders, No. 1 Naoya Inoue KO'd Karoon Jarupianlerd (unrated) in 10 rounds, Srisaket Sor Rungvisai (No. 3) welcomed Super Bank Sitlekpet to the pros by knocking him out in the fourth round, Luis Concepcion (No. 6) took the WBA title from Kohei Kono (No. 5) by a unanimous decision, unrated Jerwin Ancajas won a UD to take the IBF belt from McJoe Arroyo (No. 4) and Takuma Inoue (No. 8) survived a knockdown to outpoint Froilan Saludar (unrated). Changes were as follows: Concepcion was elevated to No. 4, Kono fell to No. 6, Ancajas entered at No. 7, Arroyo dropped to No. 8 and Takuma Inoue moved to No. 10.

FLYWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Donnie Nietes pledged his allegiance to the flyweight division and thus vacated the championship at 108 pounds.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No change.

Andre Ward shut out Alexander Brand on Aug. 6 to retain his place in the ratings and clinch a showdown with Sergey Kovalev.

THE FIGURES UNDER THE FIGHTERS' NAMES INDICATE: WEEKS IN THE RATINGS • COUNTRY • RECORD

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C TYSON FURY
238 • U.K. • 25-0-0 (18 KOs)

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
590 • Ukraine • 64-4-0 (53 KOs)
2. **DEONTAY WILDER**
146 • U.S. • 37-0-0 (36 KOs)
3. **KUBRAT PULEV**
256 • Bulgaria • 23-1-0 (12 KOs)
4. **LUIS ORTIZ**
38 • Cuba • 25-0-0 (22 KOs)
5. **ANTHONY JOSHUA**
45 • U.K. • 17-0-0 (17 KOs)
6. **BERMANE STIVERNE**
176 • Canada • 25-2-1 (21 KOs)
7. **JOSEPH PARKER**
22 • New Zealand • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)
8. **BRYANT JENNINGS**
129 • U.S. • 19-2-0 (10 KOs)
9. **DAVID HAYE**
17 • U.K. • 28-2-0 (26 KOs)
10. **ANDY RUIZ JR.**
14 • Mexico • 28-0-0 (19 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **GRIGORY DROZD**
153 • Russia • 40-1-0 (28 KOs)
2. **DENIS LEBEDEV**
345 • Russia • 29-2-0 (22 KOs)
3. **KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI**
56 • Poland • 26-0-0 (16 KOs)
4. **MARCO HUCK**
235 • Germany • 39-3-1 (27 KOs)
5. **TONY BELLEW**
16 • U.K. • 27-2-1 (17 KOs)
6. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
201 • Germany • 37-8-2 (23 KOs)
7. **OLEKSANDR USYK**
49 • Ukraine • 9-0-0 (9 KOs)
8. **MAIRIS BRIEDIS**
28 • Latvia • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)
9. **ILUNGA MAKABU**
165 • Congo • 19-2-0 (18 KOs)
10. **YUNIER DORTICOS**
16 • Cuba • 21-0-0 (20 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **SERGEY KOVALEV**
190 • Russia • 30-0-1 (26 KOs)
2. **ADONIS STEVENSON**
170 • Canada • 28-1-0 (23 KOs)
3. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
536 • U.S. • 55-7-2 (32 KOs)
4. **ELEIDER ALVAREZ**
130 • Colombia • 20-0-0 (10 KOs)
5. **ANDRE WARD**
24 • U.S. • 30-0-0 (15 KOs)
6. **JUERGEN BRAEHMER**
219 • Germany • 48-2-0 (35 KOs)
7. **ARTUR BETERBIEV**
91 • Russia • 10-0-0 (10 KOs)
8. **ISAAC CHILEMBA**
228 • Malawi • 24-4-2 (10 KOs)
9. **VYACHESLAV SHABRANSKYY**
38 • Ukraine • 17-0-0 (14 KOs)
10. **JOE SMITH JR.**
12 • U.S. • 22-1-0 (18 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **JAMES DEGALE**
170 • U.K. • 23-1-0 (14 KOs)
2. **BADOU JACK**
72 • Sweden • 20-1-2 (12 KOs)
3. **GILBERTO RAMIREZ**
113 • Mexico • 34-0-0 (24 KOs)
4. **GEORGE GROVES**
248 • U.K. • 24-3-0 (18 KOs)
5. **ANDRE DIRRELL**
108 • U.S. • 25-2-0 (16 KOs)
6. **CALLUM SMITH**
66 • U.K. • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)
7. **ANTHONY DIRRELL**
108 • U.S. • 29-1-1 (23 KOs)
8. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
361 • Armenia • 45-5-0 (30 KOs)
9. **FELIX STURM**
29 • Germany • 40-5-3 (18 KOs)
10. **FEDOR CHUDINOV**
70 • Russia • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

C CANELO ALVAREZ
42 • Mexico • 47-1-1 (33 KOs)

1. GENNADY GOLOVKIN
248 • Kaz. • 35-0-0 (32 KOs)

2. DANIEL JACOBS
91 • U.S. • 31-1-0 (28 KOs)

3. BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
93 • U.K. • 23-0-0 (12 KOs)

4. DAVID LEMIEUX
67 • Canada • 35-3-0 (32 KOs)

5. ANDY LEE
91 • Ireland • 34-3-1 (24 KOs)

6. CHRIS EUBANK JR.
74 • U.K. • 23-1-0 (18 KOs)

7. PETER QUILLIN
223 • U.S. • 32-1-1 (23 KOs)

8. HASSAN N'DAM
138 • Cameroon • 34-2-0 (20 KOs)

9. AVTANDIL KHURTSIDZE
27 • Georgia • 32-2-2 (21 KOs)

10. MACIEJ SULECKI
10 • Poland • 23-0-0 (8 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. ERISLANDY LARA
271 • Cuba • 23-2-2 (13 KOs)

2. JERMALL CHARLO
117 • U.S. • 24-0-0 (18 KOs)

3. MIGUEL COTTO
42 • P.R. • 40-5-0 (33 KOs)

4. JERMELL CHARLO
148 • U.S. • 28-0-0 (13 KOs)

5. DEMETRIUS ANDRADE
47 • U.S. • 23-0-0 (16 KOs)

6. AUSTIN TROUT
223 • U.S. • 30-3-0 (17 KOs)

7. JULIAN WILLIAMS
91 • U.S. • 22-0-1 (14 KOs)

8. LIAM SMITH
52 • U.K. • 23-0-1 (13 KOs)

9. VANES MARTIROSYAN
353 • U.S. • 36-3-1 (21 KOs)

10. JACK CULCAY
12 • Germany • 22-1-0 (11 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. KELL BROOK
281 • U.K. • 36-0-0 (25 KOs)

2. KEITH THURMAN
183 • U.S. • 27-0-0 (22 KOs)

3. AMIR KHAN
123 • U.K. • 31-4-0 (19 KOs)

4. SHAWN PORTER
144 • U.S. • 26-2-1 (16 KOs)

5. TIM BRADLEY
222 • U.S. • 33-2-1 (13 KOs)

6. DANNY GARCIA
58 • U.S. • 32-0-0 (18 KOs)

7. ERROL SPENCE
49 • U.S. • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)

8. JESSIE VARGAS
27 • U.S. • 27-1-0 (10 KOs)

9. KONSTANTIN PONOMAREV
22 • Ukraine • 30-0-0 (13 KOs)

10. FRANKIE GOMEZ
18 • U.S. • 21-0-0 (13 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

C TERENCE CRAWFORD
73 • U.S. • 29-0-0 (20 KOs)

1. VIKTOR POSTOL
160 • Ukraine • 28-1-0 (12 KOs)

2. LUCAS MATTHYSSE
283 • Argentina • 37-4-0 (34 KOs)

3. ADRIEN BRONER
123 • U.S. • 32-2-0 (24 KOs)

4. ANTONIO OROZCO
49 • U.S. • 25-0-0 (16 KOs)

5. EDUARD TROYANOVSKY
41 • Russia • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)

6. ADRIAN GRANADOS
27 • U.S. • 18-4-2 (12 KOs)

7. JACK CATTERALL
24 • U.K. • 16-0-0 (9 KOs)

8. RICKY BURNS
15 • U.K. • 40-5-1 (14 KOs)

9. JOHN MOLINA
13 • U.S. • 29-6-0 (23 KOs)

10. REGIS PROGRAIS
7 • U.S. • 18-0-0 (15 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. JORGE LINARES
131 • Venezuela • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)

2. DEJAN ZLATICANIN
74 • Montenegro • 22-0-0 (15 KOs)

3. ANTHONY CROLLA
46 • U.K. • 31-4-3 (13 KOs)

4. TERRY FLANAGAN
48 • U.K. • 31-0-0 (12 KOs)

5. RANCES BARTHELEMY
38 • Cuba • 25-0-0 (14 KOs)

6. SHARIF BOGERE
97 • Uganda • 28-1-0 (19 KOs)

7. RICHARD COMMEY
67 • Ghana • 24-0-0 (22 KOs)

8. DENIS SHAFIKOV
74 • Russia • 37-2-1 (20 KOs)

9. ROBERT EASTER
23 • U.S. • 17-0-0 (14 KOs)

10. FELIX VERDEJO
21 • Puerto Rico • 22-0-0 (15 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. FRANCISCO VARGAS
113 • Mexico • 23-0-2 (17 KOs)

2. ORLANDO SALIDO
103 • Mexico • 43-13-4 (30 KOs)

3. VASYL LOMACHENKO
13 • Ukraine • 6-1-0 (4 KOs)

4. TAKASHI MIURA
179 • Japan • 30-3-2 (23 KOs)

5. JEZREEL CORRALES
19 • Panama • 20-1-0 (8 KOs)

6. TAKASHI UCHIYAMA
349 • Japan • 24-1-1 (20 KOs)

7. JOSE PEDRAZA
86 • P.R. • 22-0-0 (12 KOs)

8. ROMAN MARTINEZ
418 • P.R. • 29-3-3 (17 KOs)

9. SAUL RODRIGUEZ
42 • U.S. • 20-0-1 (15 KOs)

10. JASON SOSA
11 • U.S. • 19-1-4 (15 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. GARY RUSSELL JR.
76 • U.S. • 27-1-0 (16 KOs)

2. CARL FRAMPTON
6 • U.K. • 23-0-0 (14 KOs)

3. LEE SELBY
130 • U.K. • 23-1-0 (8 KOs)

4. LEO SANTA CRUZ
54 • U.S. • 32-1-1 (18 KOs)

5. ABNER MARES
175 • Mexico • 29-2-1 (15 KOs)

6. SIMPIWE VETYEKA
144 • S. Africa • 29-3-0 (17 KOs)

7. JESUS CUELLAR
100 • Argentina • 28-1-0 (21 KOs)

8. OSCAR VALDEZ
22 • Mexico • 20-0-0 (18 KOs)

9. JOSEPH DIAZ JR.
24 • U.S. • 21-0-0 (12 KOs)

10. SATOSHI HOSONO
38 • Japan • 32-2-1 (21 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
305 • Cuba • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

2. SCOTT QUIGG
198 • U.K. • 31-1-2 (23 KOs)

3. NONITO DONAIRE
76 • Phil. • 37-3-0 (24 KOs)

4. GENESIS SERVANIA
130 • Phil. • 27-0-0 (11 KOs)

5. REY VARGAS
91 • Mexico • 28-0-0 (22 KOs)

6. JESSIE MAGDALENO
65 • U.S. • 23-0-0 (17 KOs)

7. HUGO RUIZ
28 • Mexico • 36-3-0 (32 KOs)

8. JONATHAN GUZMAN
7 • Dom. Rep. • 22-0-0 (22 KOs)

9. MOISES FLORES
9 • Mexico • 25-0-0 (17 KOs)

10. DIEGO DE LA HOYA
6 • Mexico • 15-0-0 (9 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. THE RING'S Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the RING title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his champion weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

THE RING Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

Records provided by boxrec.com

RING RATINGS

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
253 • Japan • 25-0-2 (17 KOs)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO**
441 • Panama • 36-4-1 (12 KOs)
3. **JAMIE MCDONNELL**
175 • U.K. • 28-2-1 (13 KOs)
4. **RAU'SHEE WARREN**
11 • U.S. • 14-1-0 (4 KOs)
5. **JUAN CARLOS PAYANO**
102 • Dom. Rep. • 17-1-0 (8 KOs)
6. **LEE HASKINS**
65 • U.K. • 33-3-0 (14 KOs)
7. **MARLON TAPALES**
38 • Phil. • 29-2-0 (12 KOs)
8. **TOMOKI KAMEDA**
162 • Japan • 31-2-0 (19 KOs)
9. **ZOLANI TETE**
26 • S. Africa • 24-3-0 (20 KOs)
10. **LUIS NERY**
6 • Thailand • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **NAOYA INOUE**
88 • Japan • 11-0-0 (9 KOs)
2. **CARLOS CUADRAS**
227 • Mexico • 35-0-1 (27 KOs)
3. **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
175 • Thailand • 41-4-1 (38 KOs)
4. **LUIS CONCEPCION**
51 • Panama • 35-4-0 (24 KOs)
5. **KHALID YAFAI**
26 • U.K. • 19-0-0 (13 KOs)
6. **KOHEI KONO**
47 • Japan • 32-9-1 (13 KOs)
7. **JERWIN ANCAJAS**
1 • Phil. • 25-1-1 (16 KOs)
8. **MCJOE ARROYO**
117 • P.R. • 17-1-0 (8 KOs)
9. **SHO ISHIDA**
13 • Japan • 22-0-0 (11 KOs)
10. **TAKUMA INOUE**
14 • Japan • 8-0-0 (2 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

C ROMAN GONZALEZ
148 • Nicaragua • 45-0-0 (38 KOs)

1. **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
179 • Mexico • 33-2-0 (24 KOs)
2. **KAZUTO IOKA**
104 • Japan • 20-1-0 (12 KOs)
3. **BRIAN VILORIA**
270 • U.S. • 36-5-0 (22 KOs)
4. **JOHNRIEL CASIMERO**
48 • Phil. • 22-3-0 (14 KOs)
5. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
130 • S. Africa • 32-2-0 (21 KOs)
6. **AMNAT RUENROENG**
122 • Thailand • 17-1-0 (5 KOs)
7. **EDGAR SOSA**
226 • Mexico • 52-9-0 (30 KOs)
8. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
258 • Argentina • 36-3-0 (19 KOs)
9. **MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
105 • P.R. • 16-3-0 (14 KOs)
10. **NAWAPHON POR CHOKCHAI**
63 • Thailand • 35-0-0 (28 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **RYOICHI TAGUCHI**
91 • Japan • 25-2-1 (11 KOs)
2. **RANDY PETALCORIN**
122 • Phil. • 23-2-1 (18 KOs)
3. **PEDRO GUEVARA**
180 • Mexico • 28-2-1 (17 KOs)
4. **AKIRA YAEGASHI**
36 • Japan • 24-5-0 (12 KOs)
5. **JAVIER MENDOZA**
74 • Mexico • 24-3-1 (19 KOs)
6. **MILAN MELINDO**
95 • Phil. • 34-2-0 (12 KOs)
7. **GANIGAN LOPEZ**
27 • Mexico • 28-6-0 (17 KOs)
8. **REY LORETO**
74 • Phil. • 23-13-0 (15 KOs)
9. **MOISES FUENTES**
21 • Mexico • 24-2-1 (13 KOs)
10. **KEN SHIRO**
9 • Japan • 8-0-0 (4 KOs)

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
273 • Thailand • 43-0-0 (17 KOs)
2. **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART**
101 • Thailand • 13-0-0 (6 KOs)
3. **BYRON ROJAS**
25 • Nicaragua • 18-3-3 (8 KOs)
4. **HEKKIE BUDLER**
207 • S. Africa • 29-2-0 (9 KOs)
5. **JOSE ARGUMEDO**
36 • Mexico • 18-3-1 (10 KOs)
6. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
180 • Japan • 31-8-0 (12 KOs)
7. **CARLOS BUITRAGO**
104 • Nicaragua • 29-2-1 (17 KOs)
8. **RIKU KANO**
15 • Japan • 10-2-1 (5 KOs)
9. **JOSE JIMENEZ**
15 • Colombia • 17-5-1 (7 KOs)
10. **SAUL JUAREZ**
9 • Mexico • 23-5-1 (12 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
118 • Nicaragua • 45-0-0 (38 KOs)
2. **SERGEY KOVALEV**
78 • Russia • 30-0-1 (26 KOs)
3. **GENNADY GOLOVKIN**
82 • Kazakhstan • 35-0-0 (32 KOs)
4. **ANDRE WARD**
52 • U.S. • 30-0-0 (15 KOs)
5. **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
71 • U.S. • 29-0-0 (20 KOs)
6. **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
159 • Cuba • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)
7. **VASYL LOMACHENKO**
13 • Ukraine • 6-1-0 (4 KO)
8. **CANELO ALVAREZ**
42 • Mexico • 47-1-1 (33 KOs)
9. **SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
69 • Japan • 25-0-2 (17 KOs)
10. **CARL FRAMPTON**
6 • U.K. • 23-0-0 (14 KOs)

THE RING POLICY ON RATED BOXERS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS

THE RING will remove from its ratings any rated boxer — including a champion — if such boxer at some point undergoes drug testing (Olympic-style or otherwise) and that boxer tests positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

In the event that a boxer has undergone testing in which the boxer provides two samples ("A" and "B") and the boxer's "A" and subsequent "B" samples test positive for a performance-enhancing drug or if his "A" sample tests positive and he waives his right to have the "B" sample tested then the boxer shall immediately be removed from the ratings.

A boxer whose "A" sample tested positive and is awaiting the results of his "B" sample will not be allowed to fight for a championship or rise in the ratings.

A boxer who is removed because of a positive test will have the opportunity to earn his way back into the ratings after any suspension period is completed.

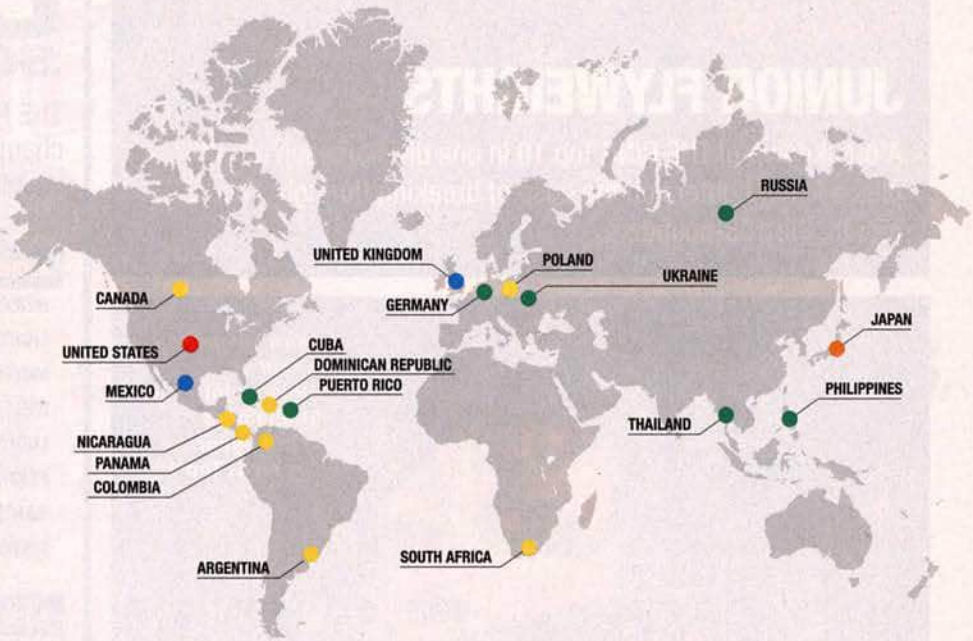
A boxer who is dropped also may be reinstated if the testing agency subsequently reverses its decision or a court of competent jurisdiction finds that the test result was invalid.

RATED FIGHTERS BY COUNTRY

●	UNITED STATES	37	
●	UNITED KINGDOM	22	
●	MEXICO	21	↑1
●	JAPAN	15	
●	PHILIPPINES	8	
●	RUSSIA	7	
●	PUERTO RICO	6	
●	UKRAINE	6	
●	CUBA	5	
●	GERMANY	5	
●	THAILAND	5	↓1
●	SOUTH AFRICA	4	
●	ARGENTINA	3	
●	CANADA	3	
●	NICARAGUA	3	
●	PANAMA	3	
●	COLOMBIA	2	
●	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	2	
●	POLAND	2	
	ARMENIA	1	
	BULGARIA	1	
	CAMEROON	1	
	CONGO	1	
	GEORGIA	1	
	GHANA	1	
	IRELAND	1	
	KAZAKHSTAN	1	
	LATVIA	1	
	MALAWI	1	
	MONTENEGRO	1	
	NEW ZEALAND	1	
	SWEDEN	1	
	UGANDA	1	
	VENEZUELA	1	

Countries out (from last month): China

Countries in: None



● 30 OR MORE ● 20 - 29 ● 10 - 19 ● 5 - 9 ● 2 - 4

BIG 3 VS. THE REST

One constant in the RING Ratings is that the U.S., U.K. and Mexico are the dominant countries. Their combined 80 rated fighters is 46 percent of the total. Here is how the big three compare to the rest of the world:

DIVISION	BIG 3	WORLD
HEAVYWEIGHTS	6	5
CRUISERWEIGHTS	1	9
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS	3	7
SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	6	4
MIDDLEWEIGHTS	5	6
JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS	7	3
WELTERWEIGHTS	9	1
JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS	8	3
LIGHTWEIGHTS	3	7
JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS	4	6
FEATHERWEIGHTS	7	3
JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS	6	4
BANTAMWEIGHTS	4	6
JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS	2	8
FLYWEIGHTS	3	8
JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS	4	6
STRAWWEIGHTS	2	8
TOTAL	80	94

SINGLE FLAGBEARERS

Thirty-four countries have at least one fighter in the RING Ratings. Fifteen of them – 44 percent – are represented by a single fighter. Here they are:

ARMENIA (ARTHUR ABRAHAM) »

BULGARIA (KUBRAT PULEV)

CAMEROON (HASSAN N'DAM)

CONGO (ILUNGA MAKABU)

GEORGIA (AVTANDIL KHURTSIDZE)

GHANA (RICHARD COMMEY)

IRELAND (ANDY LEE)

KAZAKHSTAN (GENNADY GOLOVKIN)

LATVIA (MAIRIS BRIEDIS)

MALAWI (ISAAC CHILEMBA)

MONTENEGRO (DEJAN ZLATICANIN)

NEW ZEALAND (JOSEPH PARKER)

SWEDEN (BADOU JACK)

UGANDA (SHARIF BOGERE)

VENEZUELA (JORGE LINARES)

FOCUS ON . . .

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

A breakdown of THE RING Top 10 in one division each month, plus a list of fighters on the cusp of breaking through. This month: the 108-pounders.

Akira Yaegashi is one of three major titleholders in the junior flyweight Top 10.

MOST WEEKS RATED: PEDRO GUEVARA **180**

FEWEST WEEKS RATED: KEN SHIRO **9**

OLDEST: GANIGAN LOPEZ **34**

YOUNGEST: KEN SHIRO **24**

MOST FIGHTS: MILAN MELINDO, REY LORETO **36**

FEWEST FIGHTS: SHIRO **8**

HIGHEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: SHIRO **100 PERCENT**

LOWEST WINNING PERCENTAGE: LORETO **64 PERCENT**

MOST KOS: JAVIER MENDOZA **19**

FEWEST KOS: SHIRO **4**

LONGEST CURRENT WINNING STREAK: SHIRO **8 FIGHTS**

ON THE POUND-FOR-POUND LIST: NONE

TITLEHOLDERS IN THE TOP 10: AKIRA YAEGASHI **(IBF),** RYOICHI TAGUCHI **(WBA),** GANIGAN LOPEZ **(WBC)**

ON THE CUSP (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER): JESSE ESPINAS, OMARI KIMWERI, RYO MIYAZAKI, JONATHAN TACONING, KOSEI TANAKA

OLD SCHOOL 8

THE RING staff members' current champions in the original eight weight classes.

MICHAEL ROSENTHAL RING MAGAZINE EDITOR

HEAVYWEIGHT: TYSON FURY
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: SERGEY KOVALEV
MIDDLEWEIGHT: GENNADY GOLOVKIN
WELTERWEIGHT: KELL BROOK
LIGHTWEIGHT: VASYL LOMACHENKO
FEATHERWEIGHT: GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
BANTAMWEIGHT: SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

DOUG FISCHER RINGTV.COM EDITOR

HEAVYWEIGHT: TYSON FURY
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: SERGEY KOVALEV
MIDDLEWEIGHT: GENNADY GOLOVKIN
WELTERWEIGHT: KELL BROOK
LIGHTWEIGHT: VASYL LOMACHENKO
FEATHERWEIGHT: CARL FRAMPTON
BANTAMWEIGHT: SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

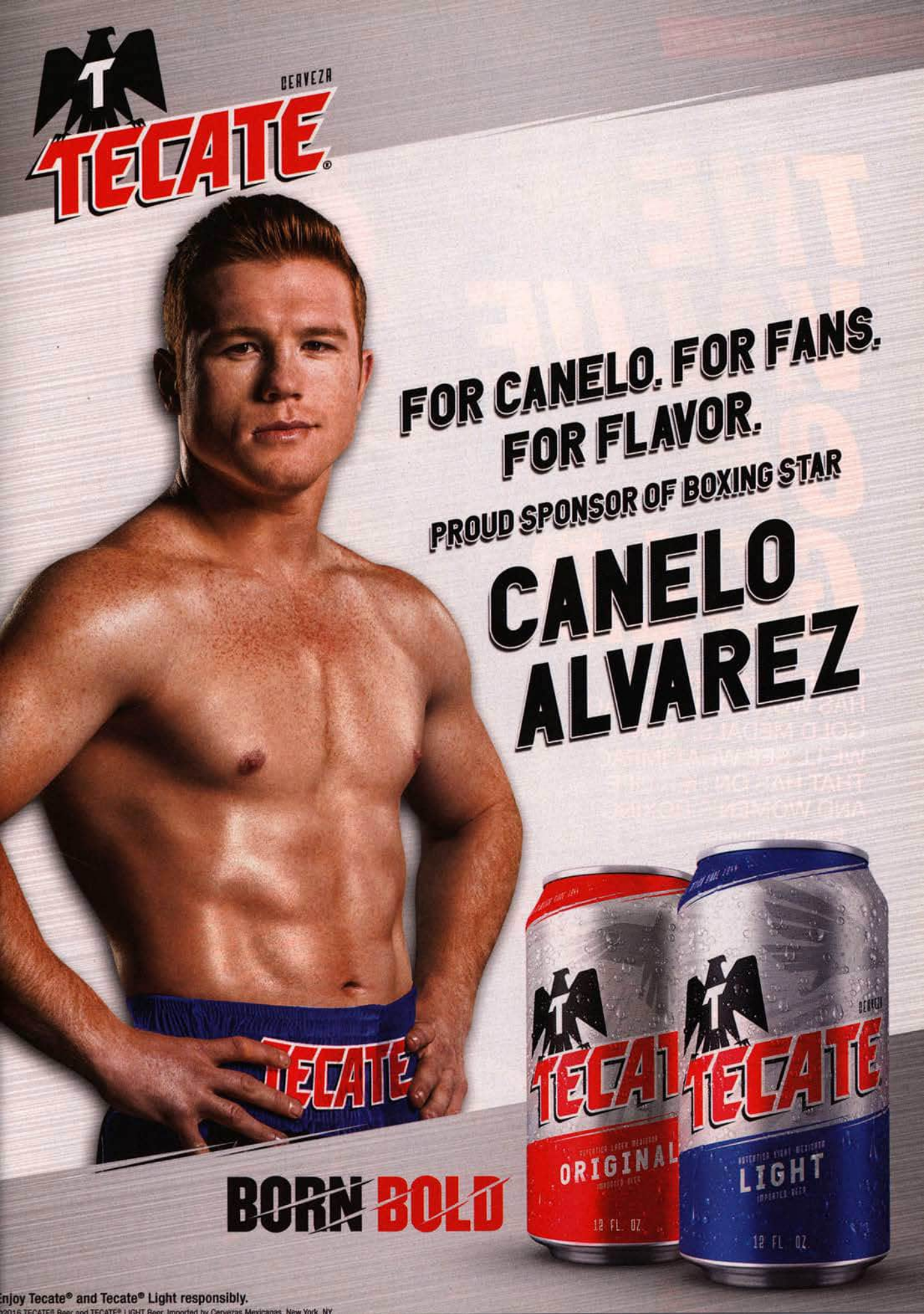
BRIAN HARTY RING MAGAZINE MANAGING EDITOR

HEAVYWEIGHT: TYSON FURY
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: SERGEY KOVALEV
MIDDLEWEIGHT: GENNADY GOLOVKIN
WELTERWEIGHT: KELL BROOK
LIGHTWEIGHT: VASYL LOMACHENKO
FEATHERWEIGHT: CARL FRAMPTON
BANTAMWEIGHT: NAOYA INOUE
FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

MITCH ABRAMSON STAFF WRITER

HEAVYWEIGHT: TYSON FURY
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: SERGEY KOVALEV
MIDDLEWEIGHT: GENNADY GOLOVKIN
WELTERWEIGHT: KELL BROOK
LIGHTWEIGHT: VASYL LOMACHENKO
FEATHERWEIGHT: CARL FRAMPTON
BANTAMWEIGHT: SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
FLYWEIGHT: ROMAN GONZALEZ

Note: *This is how the weights break down: Heavyweight includes cruiserweight, light heavyweight includes super middleweight, all divisions middleweight through flyweight include the "junior" versions, and flyweight also includes strawweight.*



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THE VALUE OF GOLD

CLARESSA SHIELDS HAS WON BACK-TO-BACK GOLD MEDALS. NOW WE'LL SEE WHAT IMPACT THAT HAS ON HER LIFE AND WOMEN'S BOXING.

By **Bernard Fernandez**

Claressa Shields brought her 2012 gold medal to Rio so she could display her complete body of work.

The story is well known, about how Joe Frazier returned home to Philadelphia after winning the heavyweight gold medal at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and received something less than a hero's welcome. Hardly any welcome at all, actually. Even when he turned pro, "Smokin' Joe" had to rely on a consortium of Philly businessmen, collectively known as Cloverlay, to not only fund his early career but also to provide him with enough money to buy Christmas presents for his young children.

Forty-eight years later, Olympic gold in at least one instance was still largely devalued. Claressa Shields, only 17 at the time, made history by becoming the first American woman boxer to take top honors at the 2012 London Olympics, the first in which the members of her gender were allowed to compete. The

165-pounder's return to her hometown of Flint, Michigan, while not completely ignored, wasn't exactly met by brass bands, media hordes and national endorsement offers. The possible reemergence of women's boxing as a serious spectator sport, or something akin to it, was still an idea whose time had not yet come back around.

"In 2012," Shields told THE RING, "I was America's little secret. Nobody knew about me. People might have heard some things but I didn't compete against most of the top girls in London. I guess I was considered a (medal) threat but not everybody knew how serious of a threat. For sure I wasn't being asked to do a lot of interviews or photo shoots."

And now?

Shields, coming off a dominating romp through the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics that earned her a second straight middleweight gold medal – making her the first U.S. fighter, male or female, to take gold in back-to-back Olympiads – is a legitimate breakout star, the poster girl for renewed interest, at least in America, in women's boxing. The brass bands, parades, interview requests and paparazzi following her around like eager puppies are all there, as well as a flood of offers from companies wanting her to endorse their products and boxing promoters hoping to obtain her signature on a contract. And she's still just 21, with a future that seems bright and almost limitless, provided she can finish shattering the glass ceiling into which she has already put a large crack. Given the fact that pros are now welcome to participate in Olympic boxing, it is not only conceivable but perhaps even likely that Shields, as a pro, could come back at 25 and go for a third gold medal at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

"She's fun to watch," Thomas Gerbasi, THE RING's women's boxing columnist, said of Shields' potential for becoming a marketable pro. "She's got power, she's aggressive, she's not looking for judges filling out every round on their scorecards. She's in there to knock people out.

"But she was like that in London too. How come no one jumped on her story four years ago, when she was 17? She was just a teenager and she was wrecking people in the ring. I talked to (Norway's) Cecilia Braekhus, who's the No. 1 pound-for-pound women's pro right now, and I talked to (retired legend) Lucia Rijker. They both go over the top in praising

Shields has begun to hoard gold.

GOLDEN GIRL

Claressa Shields became the first American fighter to successfully defend an Olympic championship. Here is a look at her results and U.S. medalists in the 2016 and 2012 Games. (Note: Scoring was changed from a points system to a round system. A 3-0 score indicates that all three judges agreed on the winner.)

SHIELDS: ROUND BY ROUND

2016

- **Round of 16 –** BYE
- **Quarterfinals –** Yaroslava Yakushina (Russia) 3-0
- **Semifinals –** Dariga Shakimova (Kazakhstan) 3-0
- **Final –** Nouchka Fontijn (Netherlands) 3-0

2012

- **Round of 16 –** BYE
- **Quarterfinals –** Anna Laurell (Sweden) 18-14
- **Semifinals –** Marina Volnova (Kazakhstan) 29-15
- **Final –** Nadezda Torlopova (Russia) 19-12

U.S. MEDALISTS

2016

- **Gold –** Claressa Shields (middleweight)
- **Silver –** Shakur Stevenson (bantamweight)
- **Bronze –** Nico Hernandez (light flyweight)

2012

- **Gold –** Claressa Shields (middleweight)
- **Bronze –** Marlen Esparza (flyweight)

Claressa Shields."

To Gerbasi's way of thinking, Sunday, Aug. 21, might be the most significant day in women's boxing since ... well, maybe ever. Not only did Shields dominate the Netherlands' Nouchka Fontijn to take repeat Olympic gold with a clear-cut, unanimous four-round decision, but later that evening, in a dandy scrap that was televised on tape-delay by NBC Sports, featherweight Heather "The Heat" Hardy scored a 10-round majority decision over Shelly Vincent at the Ford Amphitheater in Coney Island, New York.

"It was huge," Gerbasi said of the inadvertent TV doubleheader that served as dual promos for what women's boxing is and could be down the road with the right kind of backing. "If only one of those bouts happened that day, it still would have been a huge day for women's boxing. Claressa was Claressa, and Hardy and Vincent threw down for 10 exciting rounds. That was one of the better fights I've seen this year, men or women. They both brought it that night."

Shields knows and admires Hardy. She believes together they can re-spark the revolution that briefly commanded a fair amount of attention in the late 1990s and early 2000s with such headliners as Rijker, Christy Martin and celebrity daughters Laila Ali and Jacqui Frazier-Lyde.

"It's time to take the shackles off and put us on TV," Shields said of boxing's gender inequity. "Maybe three months ago I went to Gleason's Gym in New York, where I met Heather. Me and her are on the same page as far as what needs to be done for women's boxing. She helps sell out the Barclays Center and has been on several cards that were televised but they chose to show (male boxers) over her. For me to win a gold medal in the Olympics on the same day she fought on TV is a huge step for women's boxing. Now we got to keep that drive alive."

But beyond the immediate

Shakur Stevenson came within one victory of becoming the first American man to win gold since Andre Ward in 2004.

SHOWING THEIR MEDAL

TWO U.S. MEN EARN A SPOT ON THE PODIUM WHILE CONTROVERSY CONTINUES TO PLAGUE OLYMPIC BOXING

By **Bernard Fernandez**

It is an irrefutable fact that when you start at the bottom there is no place to go but up. And for the 2012 U.S. men's Olympic boxing team, the long slide that began after a record 11-medal haul in the 1984 Games finally found the basement when the nine-man squad returned from London without a single medal.

Perhaps convinced that American men had leased that basement for the long term, Sports Illustrated, in its pre-Olympic issue, predicted that not even one U.S. male boxer would return from Rio de Janeiro with a medal this year. It was a not-unreasonable supposition,as the U.S. qualified just six fighters (none of whom competed in London in 2012).

But the youthful American boxers fooled the skeptics by snagging a silver medal (by 19-year-old bantamweight Shakur Stevenson) and a bronze (by 20-year-old flyweight Nico Hernandez). A third medal could have, and probably should have, been captured by 20-year-old light welterweight Gary Antuanne Russell, who was one of several victims of head-scratchingly bad decisions. He dropped his quarterfinal bout to eventual gold medalist Fazliddin Gaibnazarov of Uzbekistan.

"It's a crying shame. It's distressing," U.S. coach Billy Walsh said of Russell's "loss," which was widely perceived to be another blatant heist in still another Olympics plagued by dubious decisions and accusations of corruption levied against the International Boxing Association(AIBA), governing body for Olympic boxing.

Tears, and lots of them, flowed from the eyes of Stevenson after his split-decision loss to Cuba's Robeisy Ramirez in their gold medal bout, although Ramirez, who won his second Olympic gold medal, appeared to do just enough to get the 2-1 nod in a battle of skilled southpaws.

Nico Hernandez (left) captured bronze in Rio.

"I tried to hold it in, but I couldn't," Stevenson, from Newark, New Jersey, said of the tears. "I kind of crashed. I don't like to lose. But I felt like (Ramirez) was stronger. It was a real close fight but I kind of knew the way it was going to go."

Hernandez, from Wichita, Kansas, had his own signature moment when he upset the heavily favored No. 2 seed, Vasilii Egorov of Russia, to advance to the quarterfinals. He later lost in the semifinals.

The Rio Olympics were marked not only by some of the odious outcomes that sullied previous Olympics but the introduction of professional boxers to the competition. Although there were fears that the more experienced pros would have their way with their mostly younger, less experienced counterparts, all three pros who fought in Rio – Cameroon's Hassan N'Dam, Thailand's Amnat Ruenroeng and Italy's Carmine Tommasone, all over 30 years of age and with a combined pro record of 66-3 – failed to make it as far as the medal rounds.

There almost certainly will be more and more capable pros filling the brackets at the 2020 Games in Tokyo, assuming they're still invited, but the belief that corruption, incompetence or both at least occasionally tilts the playing field continues to undermine the very legitimacy of the cherished quadrennial event. In addition to Russell, fighters who appeared to be on the wrong end of outrageous decisions include Kazakhstan's Vassiliy Levit, who put a beatdown on top-seeded Russian Evgeny Tishchenko in the heavyweight gold-medal bout only to lose an unanimous decision, and top-seeded bantamweight Michael Conlan, who appeared to get the better of Russia's Vladimir Nikitin but also lost an unanimous decision, assuring that Conlan wouldn't medal.

Although a clearly puzzled Levit accepted his disappointment with grace and equanimity, Conlan did not, flashing his middle finger at the offending judges and launching into an epic, expletive-filled diatribe against AIBA.

AIBA responded by making a stunning decision in the middle of competition: It expelled a number of judges and referees it believed underperformed. In the end, the U.S. men made progress while the sport's worldwide governing body arguably did not. ★

future, it might be up to Shields alone to significantly build upon the recent incremental gains made by women's boxing in the U.S., prodded in no small part by her Olympic successes. Hardy is 34 and, although she's undefeated, she has registered just four knockouts among her 18 victories. That makes Shields – nicknamed "T-Rex" by a male sparring partner because of her aggressive style and (shades of Joe Frazier) short arms – even more the center of attention. She's prepared and even eager to shoulder the weight of any responsibility that comes with being the banner-carrier for her cause. After her conquest of Fontijn, she took the opportunity to announce, with the absolute self-assuredness of, say, Floyd Mayweather Jr., that she "wanted to let it be known that I'm not just one of the great female boxers, but one of the greatest boxers who ever lived."

But the transition from celebrated curiosity to accepted superstar is still not obstacle-free. Shields is in a weight class that, at present, is largely bereft of anyone who might pose a credible threat to her.

"At 165 to 168, there's really no one out there," Gerbasi said. "She could walk out of the amateurs today and probably win a world title tomorrow. She doesn't have that dream dance partner yet. (A possible exception is Germany's Christina Hammer, who is 19-0 with nine KOs and holds the WBO middleweight title.)

"If it were me, I'd build her up like a Mike Tyson. You put her in with whoever's available, she destroys them and increases the aura of her invincibility. I mean, her record is 78-1. If she becomes a big enough draw, more desirous opponents will find their way to her."

Most, if not all, of the puzzle pieces are nonetheless falling into place for Shields. She appeared in full muscular glory in the "Body Issue" of ESPN The Magazine. Her backstory is so compelling that it has already been the subject of an ESPN

Shields took a moment during the national anthem to contemplate what she had accomplished.

2016 OLYMPIC MEDALISTS COUNTRIES

COUNTRY	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
Uzbekistan	3	2	2	7
Cuba	3	0	3	6
France	2	2	2	6
Kazakhstan	1	2	2	5
Russia	1	1	3	5
China	0	1	3	4
Great Britain	1	1	1	3
United States	1	1	1	3
Azerbaijan	0	1	1	2
Colombia	0	1	1	2
Brazil	1	0	0	1
Netherlands	0	1	0	1
Croatia	0	0	1	1
Finland	0	0	1	1
Germany	0	0	1	1
Morocco	0	0	1	1
Mexico	0	0	1	1
Mongolia	0	0	1	1
Venezuela	0	0	1	1

MEN

SUPER HEAVYWEIGHT
G – Tony Yoka (France)
S – Joe Joyce (G.B.)
B – Filip Hrgovic (Croatia) and Ivan Dychko (Kazakhstan)

HEAVYWEIGHT
G – Evgeny Tishchenko (Russia)
S – Vasiliy Levit (Kazakhstan)
B – Rustam Tulaganov (Uzbekistan) and Erislandy Savon (Cuba)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT
G – Julio Cesar La Cruz (Cuba)
S – Adilbek Niyazymbetov (Kazakhstan)
B – Mathieu Bauderlique (France) and Joshua Buatsi (G.B.)

MIDDLEWEIGHT
G – Arlen Lopez (Cuba)
S – Bektemir Melikuziev (Uzbekistan)
B – Misael Rodriguez (Mexico) and Kamran Shakhsuvarly (Azerbaijan)

WELTERWEIGHT
G – Daniyar Yeleussinov (Kazakhstan)
S – Shakhram Giyasov (Uzbekistan)
B – Mohammed Rabii (Morocco) and Souleymane Cissokho (France)

LIGHT WELTERWEIGHT
G – Fazliddin Gaibnazarov (Uzbekistan)
S – Lorenzo Sotomayor (Azerbaijan)
B – Vitaly Dunaytsev (Russia) and Artem Harutyunyan (Germany)

LIGHTWEIGHT
G – Robson Canceicao (Brazil)
S – Sofiane Oumiha (France)
B – Lazaro Alvarez (Cuba) and Dorjnyambuugiin Otgondalai (Mongolia)

BANTAMWEIGHT
G – Robeisy Ramirez (Cuba)
S – Shakur Stevenson (U.S.)
B – Vladimir Nikitin (Russia) and Murodjon Akhmadaliev (Uzbekistan)

FLYWEIGHT
G – Shakhobidin Zoirov (Uzbekistan)
S – Misha Aloyan (Russia)
B – Yoel Finol (Venezuela) and Hu Jianguan (China)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHT
G – Hasanboy Dusmatov (Uzbekistan)
S – Yuberjen Martinez (Colombia)
B – Joahnys Argilagos (Cuba) and Nico Hernandez (U.S.)

WOMEN

MIDDLEWEIGHT
G – Claressa Shields (U.S.)
S – Nouchka Fontijn (Netherlands)
B – Dariga Shakimova (Kazakhstan) and Li Qian (China)

LIGHTWEIGHT
G – Estelle Mossely (France)
S – Yin Junhua (China)
B – Mira Potkonen (Finland) and Anastasia Belyakova (Russia)

FLYWEIGHT
G – Nicola Adams (G.B.)
S – Sarah Ourahmoune (France)
B – Ren Cancan (China) and Ingrit Valencia (Colombia)

profile and will be examined further in a movie project depicting her horrific childhood as well as her ring triumphs. Beginning at age 5 she was a victim of serial sexual abuse from "male acquaintances," in addition to living in 11 homes in 12 years as a broken product of a broken system.

"I was one of the broken kids," she said. "Never felt like my life was ever gonna get better."

It has gotten better, beyond anything she possibly could have imagined. "I'm living proof," she said, "that no matter how bad your childhood was, you can still make it.

"And it's not just young girls who tell me I'm their role model. It's young boys too. Even guys my age lookuptome.Igetalotofemails from guys on social media saying stuff like, 'I've never been motivated by a woman before, but after hearing your story and seeing you fight, you motivate me so much.' They say they want to be like me, to carry themselves like me."

Lou DiBella, one of several promoters who has expressed an interest in signing Shields, has already made inroads in bringing women's boxing to public attention as the promoter of Hardy, Vincent and Amanda Serrano. He said the fight for getting women's boxing to semi-mainstream status can't be won by Shields alone. She's winning rounds but the outcome remains in doubt.

"Claressa could be a big catalyst for the change I think is coming," DiBella said. "She's a prodigy. But you can't handle it as a fad. You can't think that her gold medals alone are going to open doors everywhere. Whoever's going to promote her, whether it's me or someone else, has to make sure it's worth Claressa's while to turn pro. Then, some television network is going to decide to take the leap and put on more women's boxing. It's going to take creativity, dedication and a well- thought-out game plan to advance women's boxing in general and to maximize the potential of even an exceptional woman like Claressa Shields."

BRITAIN'S CHAMPION

NICOLA ADAMS MADE SURE THE LATEST TEAM GB RETURNED WITH AN OLYMPIC TITLE

By **Tom Gray**

Nicola Adams made it clear how she feels about her second gold medal.

The 2012 Olympic Games in London brought about a rare whirlwind of success for the British boxing team. Five medals, three of them gold, were ample proof that lottery funding, a state-of-the-art training facility and high-quality coaching could turn a group of young fighters into medal winners and champions.

Expectations were therefore extremely high for Rio de Janeiro 2016, but while Team GB performed admirably, it took a lady's touch to save the day.

In Rio, Nicola Adams made history at flyweight by claiming her second consecutive gold medal and is now the face of British Olympic boxing. The other medalists – super heavyweight Joe Joyce and light heavyweight Joshua Buatsi – received silver and bronze, respectively.

Adams, now 33 years old,

duplicated her flyweight victory from London 2012, where she became the first female fighter ever to win an Olympic tournament and, since that time, participation rates for women's boxing have increased considerably. Now, with this latest triumph, Adams becomes the first British national in 92 years to retain a boxing title. (London's Harry Mallin won middleweight gold in 1920 and 1924.)

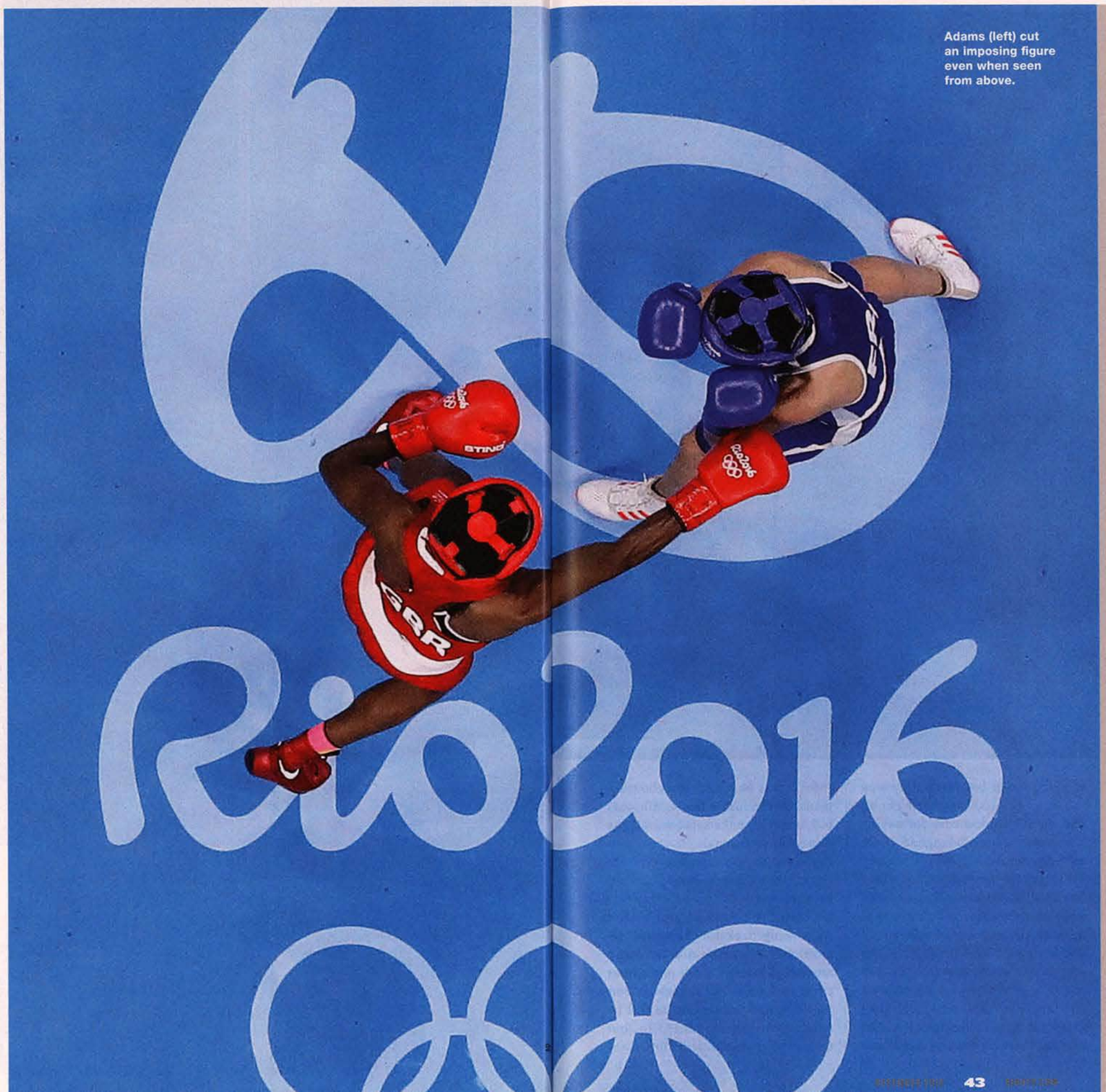
Universally acknowledged as a pioneer in her sport, it is of major importance to remember that Adams is also a great amateur fighter. As of this moment, she is the reigning Olympic, World, European and Commonwealth champion in her weight division – a literal Grand Slam of major titles. That is a remarkable achievement.

This enormous amount of international experience, juxtaposed alongside impeccable timing, disciplined tactical awareness and a jolting left jab, make her extremely difficult to conquer. But no matter how many medals and titles she accumulates, that infectious million-dollar smile continues to shine and the new Olympic champion is reveling in the adulation.

"I'm overwhelmed by the reception," said Adams, the euphoria still evident six days after making history. "It's been amazing and I've had so much support from everyone in Great Britain. I wasn't expecting this type of reaction when we arrived home, with people clapping as we walked through the (airport) terminal.

"It's hard to put it all into words but I was thinking about everything I've been through when I was on that podium – my shoulder operation in 2014 and coming back to achieve all of this has just been incredible. I burst into tears and I'm not a crier, so that was quite a shock. It just shows you how much this second gold medal means to me."

Three medals in Rio was the official target for the British boxing



Adams (left) cut an imposing figure even when seen from above.

BACK TO BACK

Nicola Adams successfully defended her 2012 Olympic flyweight championship by striking gold again in Rio. Here is a look at her results and Team GB's medalists in the 2016 and 2012 Games. (Note: Scoring was changed from a points system to a round system. A 3-0 score indicates that all three judges agreed on the winner.)

ADAMS: ROUND BY ROUND

2016

- **Round of 16** – BYE
- **Quarterfinals** – Tetyana Kob (Ukraine) 3-0
- **Semifinals** – Ren Cancan (China) 3-0
- **Final** – Sarah Ourahmoune (France) 3-0

2012

- **Round of 16** – BYE
- **Quarterfinals** – Stoyka Petrova (Bulgaria) 16-7
- **Semifinals** – Mary Kom (India) 11-6
- **Final** – Ren Cancan (China) 16-7

TEAM GB MEDALISTS

2016

- **Gold** – Nicola Adams (flyweight)
- **Silver** – Joe Joyce (super heavyweight)
- **Bronze** – Joshua Buatsi (light heavyweight)

2012

- **Gold** – Anthony Joshua (super heavyweight), Luke Campbell (bantamweight) and Nicola Adams (flyweight).
- **Silver** – Fred Evans (welterweight)
- **Bronze** – Anthony Ogogo (middleweight)

Joe Joyce (right) defeated Ivan Dychko of Kazakhstan to earn a shot at the gold medal.

team, so in effect it's mission accomplished.

However, the five medals that were annexed at London 2012 are still fresh in the memory and the drop in medal success has been noted by critics.

"Three fighters out of 12 won a medal in Rio and that's still a quarter," argued former pro titleholder and 1988 Olympic bronze medalist Richie Woodhall, a consultant coach for Team GB. "If a quarter of your team medal then that's a great result. How many individual sports can say that? You take the rough with the smooth but six of our boxers fought amateur world champions or world medalists in the first or second round. It was an extremely tough draw, so overall I think the team acquitted themselves well and I was pleased with the level of performance."

Woodhall is fiercely dedicated to his cause and eager to nurture the fighters who fell short in Rio by having them primed and ready for Tokyo 2020.

"As long as we secure our (lottery) funding then we can retain these young fighters and put the money in place for them to stay amateur and develop them over the next four years," he said. "We're up in Sheffield and it's a great environment, with no distractions, and all the fighters do there is train. I've watched amateur boxing all over the world and I'm telling you now: We have the best coaches in the world.

"This team will flourish in Tokyo. We're just at the budding stages right now but providing we get our funding, we'll secure a lot of medals in 2020."

Despite Rio belonging to Adams from a British boxing standpoint, it is important to recognize both Joyce and Buatsi. Joyce lost out on gold when he dropped a highly controversial decision to reigning super heavyweight world champion Tony Yoka of France.

"(Yoka) landed a few eye-catching shots, but I definitely won the first round, the third round and there's a good case for saying I won the second," laughed Joyce contemptuously.

"Before the final, I put my phone on to airplane mode and, afterwards, when I put it back on, it almost blew up with the amount of messages I had saying I'd won the fight. I also saw the punch stats and I was way ahead in terms of punches thrown and landed. (Yoka) was pulling Ali shuffles at the end like he deserved to win and I just kept hitting him."

Joyce was noncommittal about his plans for the future but, at 30 years old, it might make sense to roll the dice as a professional.

That is not the case, however, for the 23-year-old Buatsi, who claimed bronze.

"Once I go professional there's no turning back for me," said the charismatic knockout artist, who established himself as one of the most exciting fighters in the tournament. "Whatever decision I make, I'll be wholeheartedly committed to that decision. Staying with Team GB for Tokyo 2020 would be terrific but the question is what could I do (as a professional) in those four years? Both options look good but, right now, I'm trying not to think about boxing. I'm in holiday mode."

Joyce was also in the process of booking a holiday but it's unlikely that Adams will have much time for globetrotting. It has been quite a journey for the quick-fisted girl from Leeds, England, and she is even more in demand than ever before. Right now, there are simply not enough hours in the day to fulfill her media commitments and a plethora of other engagements.

"I never dreamed I would be this big or that women's boxing would be this popular," said Adams with habitual enthusiasm. "To think how much this sport has grown since I won gold in London is just unbelievable. I'm now double Olympic champion and while I'm not really sure what the future holds, anything is possible and that is really exciting.

"Attempting to become a three-time Olympic champion in Tokyo is something to seriously consider because we've never had one of them in (British) boxing, so that would be historical. I'd also love to make a big splash as a professional. I'd love to break down the barriers and let people know that women are here to make a noise on the pro scene too."

Adams also revealed that an acting career is a possibility, as is a stint in broadcasting. When you're a trailblazer, a history maker and a champion you can write your own ticket in an assortment of different fields, particularly when you have the outgoing personality, the looks and the TV-friendly style to go with those accolades.

One man who is very keen to see Adams retain her amateur status is Woodhall. Hypothetically speaking, Adams would compete as a 37-year-old at Tokyo 2020, but when one considers her athletic qualities, her skillset and her unrivaled experience, only a fool would bet against her having major success at a third Olympic tournament,

"I hope Nicola carries on (as an amateur) because can you imagine her winning three gold medals?" Woodhall said. "What she has already accomplished is incredible but three Olympic titles in a row would just be out there.

"Nicky is a performer and on the biggest stage, at the highest level, she always pulls it out. Despite the fact that she's in her early 30s, I think there's a few more years left in her. She's a good athlete, she trains hard and she still has a future in amateur boxing if she wants to continue."

Another memorable Olympic run? A lucrative professional contract? An acting career? It will be a tough choice for Team GB's golden girl to make over the next few months, but it's just the type of predicament Nicola Adams welcomes.

POSITIVE STEP

Meldonium has been the source of much trouble for Russian athletes this year, including Alexander Povetkin.

THE NEW **'CLEAN BOXING PROGRAM'** IS ONE WEAPON IN THE NEVER-ENDING BATTLE TO STOP THE USE OF PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS

By **Norm Frauenheim**

They have been reduced to three letters, readily identifiable and increasingly a symbol for the era they have come to represent. PEDs, performance-enhancing drugs, sum up a whole litany of suspicions, twisted motivations and multiplying dangers. They have been around, evolving like a contagion, for a generation and more.

Over the last 25 years, more and more opening bells have been accompanied by familiar whispers – a guessing game at ringside and in the cheap seats about who's using and who's not. Guilt is the presumption. Innocence is a nice idea. Naive too.

Fair or not, guilt before innocence is the public perception. Fact or not, that perception is bad for business. Skeptical fans can turn into ex-customers.

Shared by public and media alike, much of the skepticism in boxing reflects real doubts about a sport long subjected to outdated testing and differing rules from underfunded commissions in New York, Nevada, California and every state in between.

"Boxing has been facing a problem with drugs and we have to address it," WBC President Mauricio Sulaiman said.

But how? There's no simple Rx for the PED impact, especially in an international game that often resists regulation. Major League Baseball and the National Football League have commissioners. Boxing only has chaos. Even other international sports, such as cycling and the Olympics, have found ways to attack the doping problem. It hasn't been eliminated. As long as there are medals and money, there will be motivation to dope. But proof in 2012 that seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong used PEDs and the ban of more than 100 Russian athletes from the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics in August are signs of a serious intent to stop as much of it as possible.

Still, it's impossible to say whether the anti-doping movement can be sustained. The allegations of state-sanctioned PEDs for Russian athletes at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics are a disturbing reminder that the problem exists at the highest levels.

Before the Berlin Wall fell, East Germany was an Olympic power because of a government-sanctioned diet of chemical enhancers for its athletes. With help from some of those same East German chemists, doping continued in China among female swimmers in the 1990s.

From Sulaiman, there's a move

to introduce a new level – if not a new kind – of vigilance with the Clean Boxing Program. The WBC, which formally announced the program on May 7 before Canelo Alvarez's stoppage of Amir Khan in Las Vegas, will bankroll it. Dr. Margaret Goodman, former chief ringside physician and chairperson of the medical advisory board for the Nevada State Athletic Commission, will administer it through her Voluntary Anti-Doping Association (VADA).

"Boxing has a litany of problems but this program will try to establish some standardization," Goodman said in May. "It's time we start dealing with this."

Goodman was still working to put together the ambitious program late in August. When the WBC introduced it, the sanctioning body wanted the Top 15 fighters ranked in each weight class to register for random, year-round blood and urine testing – by Aug. 9.

However, only about 25 percent of them had enrolled in the program, forcing a postponement until Sept. 9.

"This program really is unprecedented and it will take time for fighters and their reps to get used to it," Goodman said in an email. "It's not about punishment; it's about supporting clean sport."

If they failed to register, they were warned that they would be stripped of their WBC rankings.

"If they have not submitted paperwork by 9/9, they WILL be dropped," Goodman said.

As of late August, it still wasn't clear whether the WBC could enforce a program that Sulaiman hopes will emphasize education as much as vigilance.

The WBC posts information, listing all of the substances on the World Anti-Doping Agency's banned list. All fighters can access it. It also includes a message from Tyler Hamilton, a former Tour de France cyclist who talks about his PED use. There's also a hotline, which fighters can call to ask anonymously about any prescription or supplement they might ingest.

"The WBC is not a police force," Sulaiman said. "We are here to help and work with commissions and any other regulatory agencies."

Prominent names, including WBC heavyweight champion Deontay Wilder, offered an early endorsement of the Clean Boxing Program by enrolling in it not long after it was announced. However, there was also some criticism from Wilder, who lost a $4,504,500 payday when his Moscow title defense on May 21 was shelved in the wake of mandatory contender Alexander Povetkin's positive test for meldonium.

"I haven't heard nothing," Wilder told RingTV.com before the WBC wrapped up an investigation in mid-August by announcing there would be no suspension of Povetkin. "The last time I heard, something was supposed to happen in June and it didn't happen. I don't even know what to say about it anymore.

Dr. Margaret Goodman

"It's like to the point of, 'Why do we have a Clean Boxing Program when there's no repercussions behind it if you get caught?' It's good to make people aware of what's taking place with illegal substances and drugs and who is using it. But if there are no consequences behind your actions, then what good does it do?"

Wilder was frustrated by injuries to his hand and biceps, both sustained in a victory over Chris Arreola in July. While Wilder undergoes surgery and works his way back for a fight, perhaps in early 2017, the WBC granted Povetkin the right to fight for an interim title against Bermane Stiverne. Wilder sounded as though he was forced to pay a price for Povetkin's PED use. Maybe he was. But here's where legal maneuvers, money and perhaps cultural differences get in the way.

Povetkin promoter Andrey Ryabinsky, who promised to pursue a $34.5 million lawsuit against Wilder for defamation and breach of contract for refusing to fight Povetkin, claimed victory in the way the WBC ended its investigation. The ruling body decided not to act despite testimony from expert witness Dr. Daniel Eichner, a former scientist for the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, relating to the fact that a trace of meldonium showed up in only one of four tests that Povetkin underwent. Eichner testified that it would be impossible to test negative for meldonium three times and then test positive days later without having ingested it in the interim.

A question also lingers about whether Povetkin even knew meldonium was no longer legal. It was added to WADA's banned list – 192 substances long – for the first time on Jan. 1, 2016. Meldonium is the same substance that has been the source of so much controversy and trouble for Russian athletes this year. Russians accounted for 30 of the 158 positive tests for meldonium in the first four months of 2016, according to the New York Times, which also reported that as many as 700 of the country's athletes used it in the year before it was banned.

Tennis star Maria Sharapova, a U.S. resident since 1994, was suspended for two years after testing positive for it in March. Sharapova, who said she had been taking the substance for a decade, also said she didn't know it had been banned.

Then there is Russian swimmer Yulia Efimova, who won a silver medal in Rio in the 100-meter breaststroke amid a bit of Olympic drama in which American gold medalist Lilly King waved an admonishing finger at her after winning a semifinal heat.

CLEAN BOXING PROGRAM

The ambitious program, the brainchild of VADA and the WBC, aims to educate boxers and provide a level of standardization in the ongoing effort to deal with PEDs in the sport. The boxers who take part will be subject to random year-round drug testing. These are among the boxers' responsibilities:

1. Review an educational webinar and attest they've reviewed it.

2. Submit registration and whereabouts (for random testing) forms.

3. Keep VADA apprised of their whereabouts.

4. Access to Drug Free Sport's Resource Exchange Center (REC) for any questions about medications and supplements

5. Advise their treating physicians of VADA's "prohibited" list.

6. Advise VADA of Emergency Room treatment that could involve prohibited substances.

Notes: Fighters will be notified in writing of test results, which also will be sent to the WBC, commissions, promoters, fighter representatives and any oversight organization. … Boxers not ranked by the WBC or outside its Top 15 (the cutoff for mandatory participation) can take part in the program. … No boxer will incur costs.

Efimova had been living in Los Angeles and training at the University of Southern California for the last four years. She had tested positive multiple times but was one of the Russians allowed to compete in Rio after winning an appeal, based in part on a March test for meldonium. WADA ruled in her favor, saying days before the Rio Games that no one really knows how long meldonium stays in the system. If true, it is a ruling that in effect validated what Povetkin and Ryabinsky had been saying.

If Efimova or Sharapova or Povetkin took meldonium late last year and the substance was still in their blood in March or May, they were within the rules.

Meanwhile, Russian president Valdimir Putin said meldonium should not be classified as a performance enhancer.

"It doesn't influence the result," Putin was quoted as saying.

Maybe it doesn't. It was created in Latvia in the late 1970s and given to Russian soldiers in an attempt to enhance their stamina in Afghanistan during a nine-year war that ended in a Russian withdrawal in 1989. Clearly not the result Putin would have wanted.

Meanwhile, WADA's ruling on the Russian swimmer's appeal likely influenced the WBC decision not to act against Povetkin, despite Wilder's evident frustration. Efimova won silver on Aug. 7. The WBC announced it would not act against Povetkin on Aug. 19, 12 days later. Any other decision might have put the WBC in some dangerous currents, legally and culturally.

A similar scenario played out much closer to the WBC's home in Mexico City in June.

Francisco Vargas, the WBC junior lightweight champion, also from Mexico City, was allowed to fight Orlando Salido on June 4 at StubHub Center in Carson, California, despite a positive test for clenbuterol, sometimes used to cut weight. It's also an illegal substance cattlemen use to speed up growth and increase muscle mass in beef.

Vargas said he tested positive after a dinner of carne asada, a meal his mother made for him at home. Vargas said his mom purchased the meat at a Mexico City grocery store.

The California State Athletic Commission chose not to halt the bout after hearing Vargas' explanation. California's regulatory agency also determined that the positive test could have come from beef injected with the steroid. For boxing, there's already precedence. Erik Morales tested positive for clenbuterol in a comeback bout at the end of his Hall of Fame career. He blamed it on contaminated meat.

It turns out athletes in other sports have also been told to be careful about clenbuterol. In early May, the NFL and the league's union, the NFLPA, warned players about eating meat in Mexico and China.

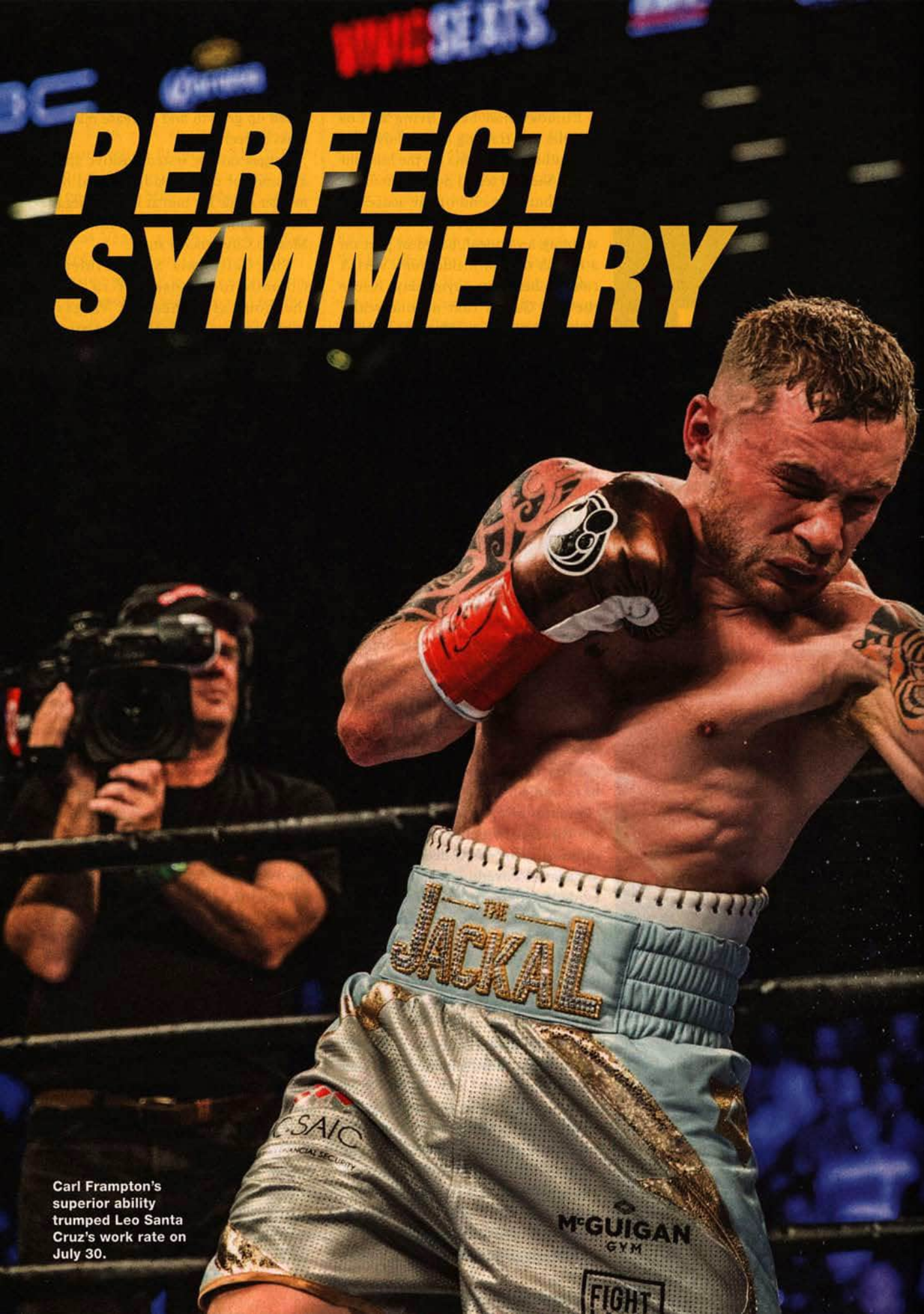
Instead of pulling the plug on an intriguing bout, the California commission agreed to subject Vargas to further testing. VADA tested Vargas three times in Mexico and two more times in California. All five came back negative before Vargas and Salido fought to a majority draw in what many think was a potential Fight of the Year.

For Sulaiman, further testing was the right move and a decision that ensured the customers got a great fight.

"Every one of these situations is different," Sulaiman said. "Many fighters come from poor backgrounds. Many eat what they know and what their families can afford. Over time, I think the Clean Boxing Program will help them understand what they can and can't do. For us, it's a beginning. In the end, the athletes have to know that there's danger in drugs."

The customers also have to know that there's credibility in the procedure. If that happens, the business will finally eliminate the cynicism and suspicions about doping. Call it a positive test.

PERFECT SYMMETRY



Carl Frampton's superior ability trumped Leo Santa Cruz's work rate on July 30.

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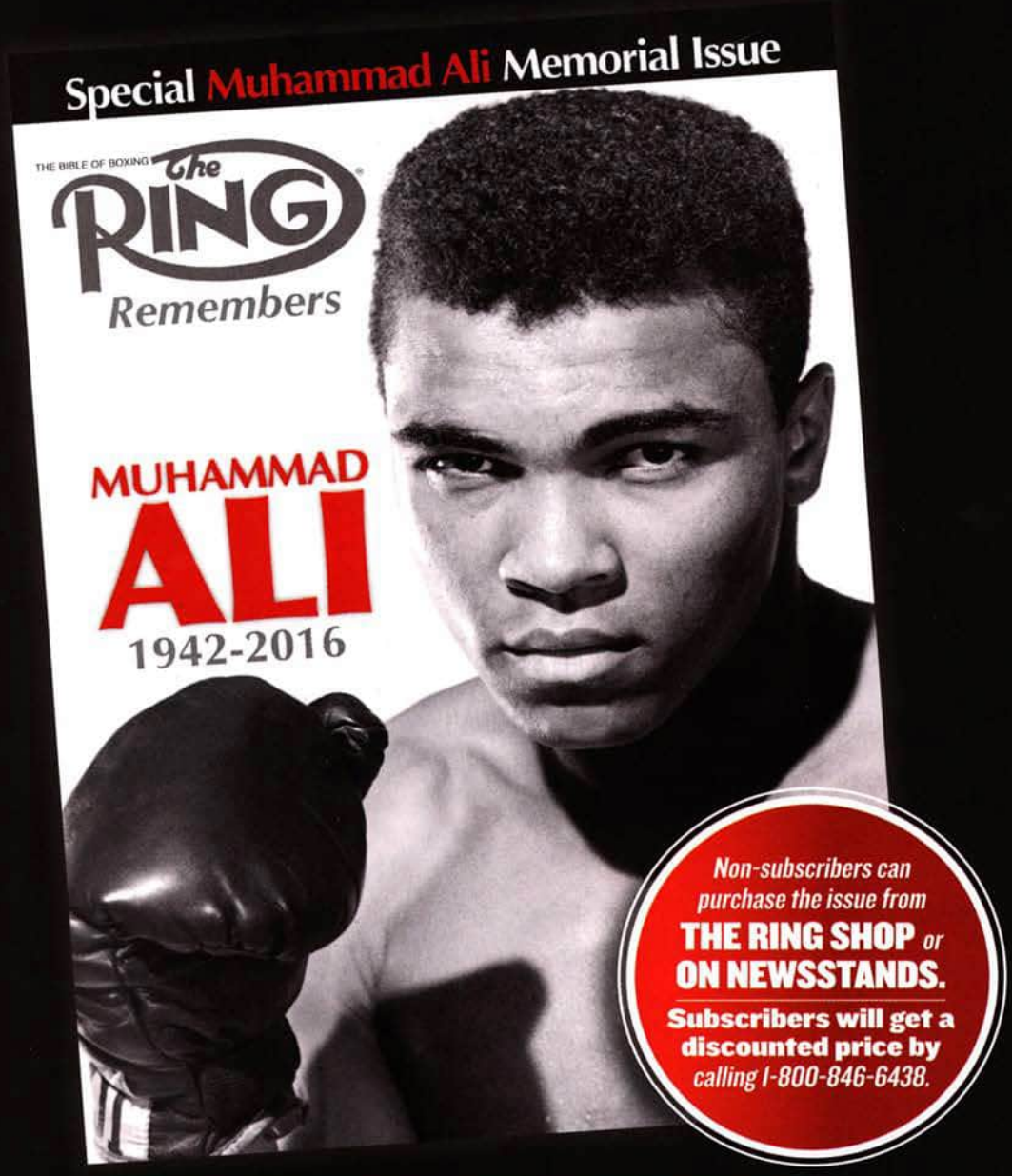

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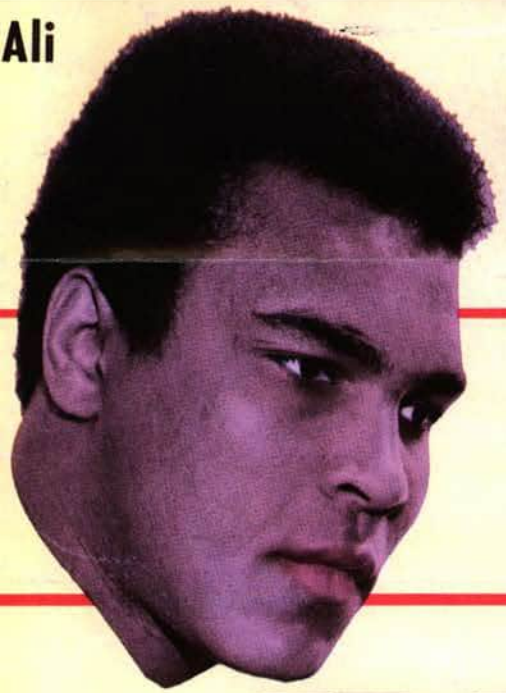

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VS

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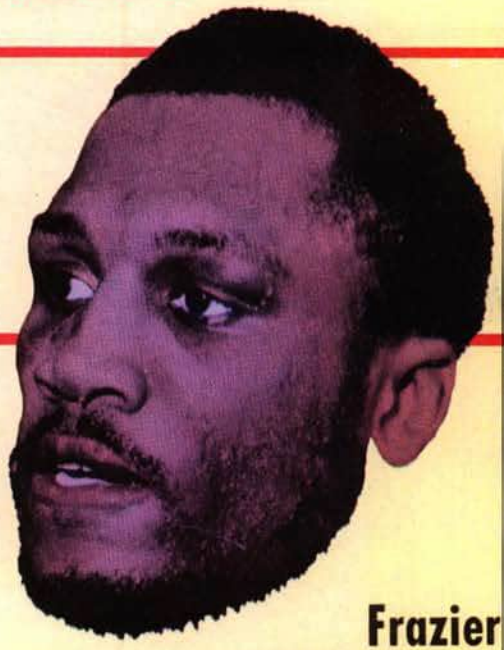

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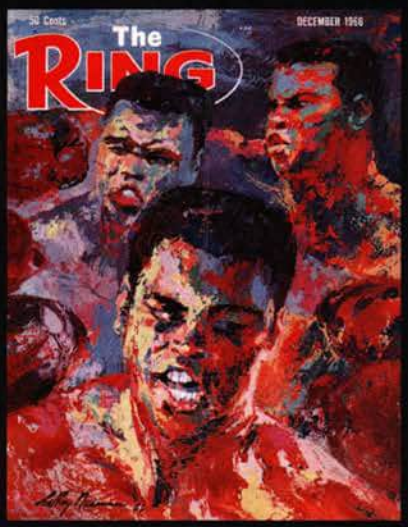

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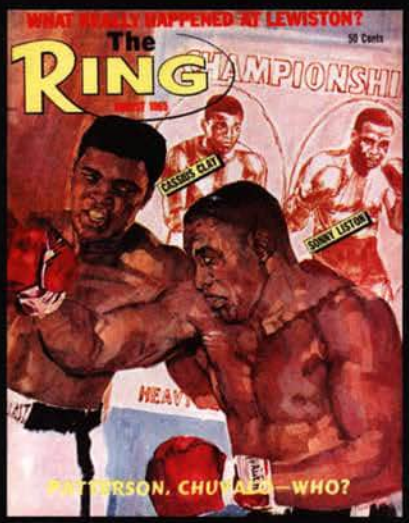

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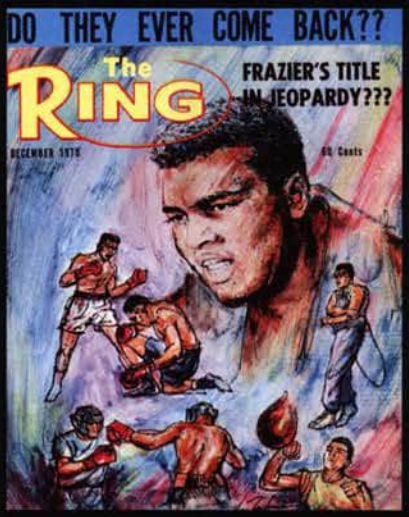

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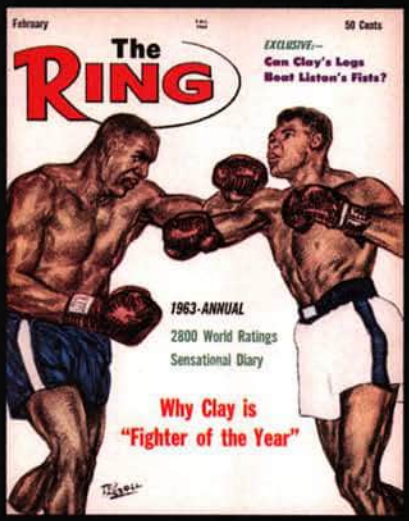

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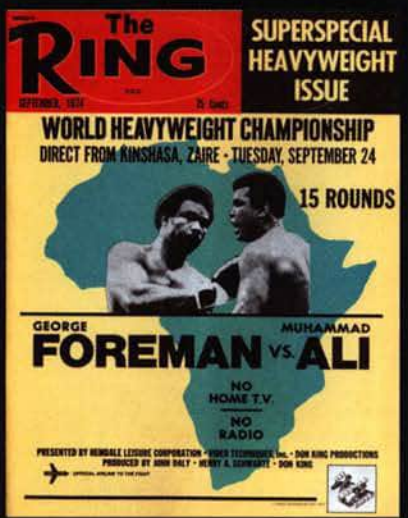

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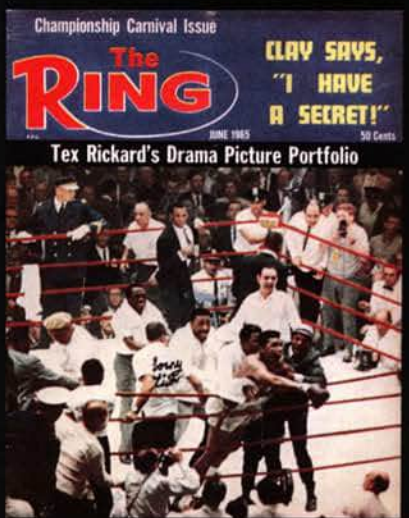


#9 AUGUST 2017

CARL FRAMPTON'S IMPRESSIVE VICTORY OVER **LEO SANTA CRUZ** GAVE HIM THE SAME BELT HIS MANAGER AND FELLOW IRISHMAN, BARRY MCGUIGAN, LOST 30 YEARS EARLIER, BUT THE PROTEGE MIGHT TURN OUT TO BE BETTER THAN THE MASTER

By **Elliot Worsell**

"And the new ..." It's Friday, Aug. 12 and newly-anointed WBA featherweight titleholder Carl Frampton, a 29-year-old from Belfast, Northern Ireland, prepares to soak up acclaim from thousands of fans at Belfast City Hall. But he's stumped by a slight problem: He has yet to receive his title belt. Fifty-five-year-old Barry McGuigan, meanwhile, his longtime manager and a former WBA featherweight champion in his own right, has an idea, one that requires him to locate the belt he won back in 1985, dust it down and then hand it over for Frampton to use throughout his homecoming celebration. And the new? Hardly. Still, Frampton appreciates his fellow Irishman's generosity and later poses for photographs with the belt slung over his shoulder and wrapped

Barry McGuigan (middle, with Frampton and son Shane) believed in his fighter from the beginning.

around his waist. Most who see the pictures have no idea the belt belongs to McGuigan. It's their little secret.

"They look pretty much the same but Barry's looks a bit older," Frampton says. "It's 31 years old. It's not going to look great."

Oh, but it did. Look past the scuff marks and frayed leather and the spectacle was great in every way possible. Think about it. Barry McGuigan hands over the actual title he won in 1985 to the man he has nurtured since 2009, a man who became part of the belt's lineage when he impressively dethroned Leo Santa Cruz on July 30 in Brooklyn, New York. How poignant. How powerful. How perfect.

"It's a nice feeling, it really is," Frampton says. "I knew it would be nice to win that title back, but, no disrespect to Barry, I was doing this for myself and for my family and for the whole team. I was doing it for us all."

Barry McGuigan was 24 years of age when he defeated the great Panamanian Eusebio Pedroza over 15 rounds at Loftus Road Stadium in London to lift the WBA featherweight belt. As a career high point, the night of June 8, 1985, had everything. It had the fighter's father, Pat, singing "Danny Boy" before a crowd of 26,000; it had 19 million people watching at home; it had an aging yet still supreme champion dragged to Britain and stripped of his belt in a bear-pit; it had 15 rounds; it had drama; it had Irish Catholics and Protestants uniting in the name of one man; it had Barry, the Catholic, and his wife Sandra, the Protestant; and it had the ghost of Young Ali, an African boxer who tragically passed away following a fight with McGuigan in '82, overseeing it all. (Indeed, the fight was dedicated to Ali.)

Last year, on its 30th anniversary, Barry gathered some of those closest to him in a house in Battersea, not far from the McGuigan gym, and played

the Pedroza fight in its entirety on a television screen.

Ostensibly a history lesson, Carl Frampton showed up for class, as did a number of other young boxers from the gym, all keen to learn, all keen to see Barry at the peak of his powers. Other McGuigans were also present. One of them, Barry's son, Shane, is Frampton's coach and has this year emerged as one of the most astute young cornermen in the sport. He, too, was an interested observer.

"I had to move my head so much in that fight," Barry remembers, shifting his head now, side-to-side, some 31 years later. "Pedroza kept hitting me on the Adam's apple and my neck was so sore after the fight. I couldn't swallow for about three days.

"In the end, I subdued him because I kept so busy. I knew he needed time and liked to slow the pace down, and I knew the only way to beat him was to make sure he didn't have that luxury.

"I remember hurting him with a left hook to the body in the fifth round," Barry continues, winding back his left hand to mimic the shot, "boom, boom, boom! Pedroza gasped. He was impassive and kept a poker face, though, so I wasn't sure I'd properly got him. He shoved me away and the bell went. He then lifted his leg up before walking back to his stool and that was the sign. I knew I'd got him. I could see my brother, Dermot, at the side of the ring getting animated and jumping up and down. We were getting to him."

Frampton watched McGuigan watch the fight that day in Battersea and marveled at his ability to recall the finer details and lose himself in the drama all over again. "He wasn't sitting still at any moment," Frampton says. "He was moving his head like he was still fighting Pedroza. Also, it was very emotional for Barry because he saw images of his brother, Dermot, who was a big part of his team and is no longer with us.

"To be honest, that fight means so much to Barry and to a whole generation. Nineteen million people watched it on television. We're never going to get those numbers again because of the way TV is these days and the fact the big fights are on pay-per-view. I try to explain to people my age just how popular Barry McGuigan was but it's difficult unless you were around at the time. It's a bit like if David Beckham walked past you in the street. That was what it was like for Barry back then. That's the sort of fame he had."

It's this kind of fame that led to Frampton being lazily compared to McGuigan for the majority of his own seven-year professional career. That and Ireland's hunger for The Next McGuigan. "First of all, Carl is not me," says McGuigan. "He is a different fighter to me. He has more tools than I ever had. He's perhaps not as good as I was coming forward but he's an awful lot better than I was boxing on the retreat and using his skills. The bottom line is, he's his own man."

"It's nice to be compared to Barry but it's lazy journalism to compare our fighting styles," adds Frampton. "We don't have a similar style at all. Being talked about in the same breath as Barry is great, though. It's an honor. But it's just as nice to step out of his shadow and be considered a good fighter in my own right."

The idea of eventual separation (from comparisons rather than contracts) following lengthy association has been the aim ever since McGuigan first set eyes on Frampton at Ireland's National Stadium in 2007 and decided there and then that he wanted to be part of his journey in the pros. "I spotted this amateur kid at featherweight, my old weight division, and was immediately attracted to him," he recalls. "I thought, 'Wow, this kid can fight.' He was

brilliant on his feet, had great in-and-out movement, could punch in bunches, pick single shots and seemed to have it all. He stood out like a sore thumb. I'd had a thousand people over the years ask me to manage them and I just looked at this guy and said, 'I want to look after this guy.' I didn't know where he was from. It didn't matter."

Later, McGuigan and Frampton posed together for a picture. It's

IRISH HEROS

Carl Frampton is only the latest product of a strong tradition of Irish boxers. Here are 10 talented fighters of Irish origin who preceded Frampton into the ring (including the years they were active):

Steve Collins (1986-97)
Two-division world titleholder in the mid-1990s.

Nonpareil Jack Dempsey (1883-95)
Middleweight champ was one of the best of his time.

Dave McAuley (1983-92)
Held a world flyweight title for three years.

Jack McAuliffe (1885-97)
One of the few top-tier boxers to retire undefeated.

Wayne McCullough (1993-2008)
Olympic silver medalist held a bantamweight title.

Barry McGuigan (1981-89)
Outpointed Eusebio Pedroza to win the 126-pound crown.

Jimmy McLarnin (1923-36)
All-time great defeated a number of Hall of Famers.

Mike McTigue (1914-30)
Defeated the legendary Battling Siki to win the 175-pound title.

Rinty Monaghan (1932-49)
Belfast native was flyweight champion after WWII.

Five more:
Bernard Dunne, Deirdre Gogarty, Andy Lee, Peter Maher and Dave Sullivan.

tough to decipher who asked whom. McGuigan then discovered Frampton hailed from Belfast's Midland Boxing Club, a gym run by Kenny Beattie, a man with whom McGuigan went to the Commonwealth Games in 1978, and also that Frampton was a Protestant kid dating a Catholic girl. Fate, Barry discerned, must surely have brought him and Frampton together.

"When it was announced Barry had signed me, I remember saying at the press conference something like, 'If I haven't won a world title by the time I finish my career, I will be very disappointed.'That was always the goal," says Carl. "I knew I had it in me."

With McGuigan by his side, often sitting ringside bobbing his head as though Pedroza is still aiming for his throat, Frampton landed his first world title, the IBF's junior featherweight crown, in September 2014 with a comprehensive points win against Spain's Kiko Martinez, and then 17 months later added Scott Quigg's WBA junior featherweight strap to the collection via split decision at a sold-out Manchester Arena. "Quigg, in my opinion, was a Sky television hype-job," Frampton says now. "I'm just going to be honest. I don't think he's a very good fighter. I was winning rounds in the first half of that fight without really doing anything. I didn't have to get out of second gear. I don't know what he was doing."

He'd describe his next bout, the WBA featherweight title win against Leo Santa Cruz, as far more satisfying. Satisfying for a number of reasons, one suspects. Satisfying because it was a virtuoso performance, one which announced him on an international stage and wowed fans watching on Showtime, satisfying because it delivered another world title in a second weight class, satisfying because he dethroned a three-weight world champion, satisfying because he claimed Barry McGuigan's old belt, and satisfying, perhaps most of all, because it raised his stock to such a degree that those who once idly compared him to McGuigan and tagged him The Next McGuigan now say he might even be better than McGuigan and could be the greatest Irishman to ever lace up a pair of boxing gloves.

"That has been mentioned because I beat Santa Cruz and Quigg, but I don't think I'm there yet," says Frampton. "I believe that with the right fights I could be, though. There are still big names for me to fight and I have the potential to move up to (junior lightweight) and win a world title in a third weight division. I'd like to do that and stand on my own. Steve Collins is the only other boxer from Northern Ireland to win world titles in two weight classes. So, if I did it in three, that would be amazing."

McGuigan calls his own time at the top "all too fleeting." He considers Pedroza at Loftus Road his best night, a 1985 win over Juan Laporte his best performance and the defeat to Steve Cruz in '86, amid the sweltering desert heat in Las Vegas, his bravest performance but very worst night.

Frampton, unbeaten in 23 fights, wants more, of course, but is just as wise to and envious of the fact McGuigan retired from boxing at 28 and is now considered one of the lucid and lucky ones. "Barry packed it up early and got out at the right time and I admire him for that as much as anything," Frampton says. "He listened to the signs.

"I'm 29 now and still feel like I'm getting better. The last fight was probably my best performance. But I understand it's a hard game and Barry felt burnt out by the training and the fighting and wanted to spend more time with his family. I feel like I'm missing out on my kids growing up too. I feel like I'm missing out on a lot. That's why any sign of deterioration, or me going downhill, or losing the speed, and I'll get out. If I'm still a fighter when I turn 33, I'll be very disappointed."

Forget the belt and the shoehorned style similarities, most of which don't exist, Carl Frampton and Barry McGuigan are bound by one time-honored, universal boxing dream – to remember and to be remembered. So far, the signs are good.

Frampton and Santa Cruz treated fans in Brooklyn to a gem.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

AFFABLE FEATHERWEIGHT **JOSEPH DIAZ JR.** SEEMS TO HAVE STAR QUALITY BUT CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD

By **Doug Fischer**

Joseph Diaz Jr. (right) seems to have it all, including ferocity.

Joseph Diaz Jr.'s opponent for his coveted slot on the Canelo Alvarez-Liam Smith undercard had just been selected when Diaz spoke to THE RING about fighting on the Sept. 17 HBO Pay-Per-View show and his goals for 2017.

The 2012 U.S. Olympian could barely contain his enthusiasm despite facing

Diaz's charm is a valuable marketing tool.

the character and the boxing ability to be very successful and maybe a crossover star."

HBO exposure was an integral part of boxing standouts of previous eras – from Roy Jones Jr. to Oscar De La Hoya to Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao – evolving into crossover successes. And Golden Boy's brain trust, which is headed up by De La Hoya, believes repeated appearances on the subscription cable network can help Diaz do the same. However, convincing casual boxing fans and general sports fans to pay attention to a featherweight, even one as talented as Diaz, could prove to be challenging.

Generally speaking, sub-lightweights are a hard sell in the U.S. Which is not to say that lighter-weight attractions have not done big business in America while being showcased on HBO. Naseem Hamed, Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales and Pacquiao are just a few who have. However, while those legends made their names in the 126-pound division, they weren't born in America and they had loyal fan support from their countrymen before they became crossover stars.

U.S.-born featherweight stars are rare. The last American featherweight regularly featured on HBO was Kevin Kelley, a former titleholder and perennial contender in the 1990s. Tom Loeffler, who is now known for promoting Gennady Golovkin, managed Kelley and admits that it was a long, hard road getting the loquacious New Yorker on HBO.

"Kevin was an amazing talent and personality fighting out of Flushing, Queens," Loeffler said. "He was a featherweight standout and, if memory serves me, he was the mandatory

the definition of a spoiler in Andrew Cancio, a battle-tested but under-the-radar fringe contender who can punch. Cancio is the kind of high-risk, low-reward opponent that most up-and-comers avoid, especially when they are as close to a title shot as Diaz is.

However, Diaz's promoter, Golden Boy Promotions, had no reservations matching THE RING's No. 9-rated featherweight with Cancio and the young contender accepted the fight without hesitation.

"He's willing to take risks," said Robert Diaz, Golden Boy's head matchmaker. "It's not hard to make tough fights with Diaz."

At age 23, the 21-0 native of South El Monte, California, has already had his share of difficult outs against seasoned opponents, including a 10-round decision over former title challenger Jayson Velez in March and a 10-round gut check against the rugged Rene Alvarado last July.

Robert Diaz (no relation) is confident the hard-earned victories have prepared the gifted southpaw to challenge for a world title and he firmly believes that Diaz will become one of boxing's top names after he wins a major featherweight belt.

"'Jojo' has the potential to be something special," the matchmaker told THE RING. "He's got the amateur credentials, the personality, the looks,

challenger in all four major sanctioning bodies at one time. He was known in the boxing community because he made for good fights that were televised on MSG network, ESPN and the USA Network, but he was unknown outside of it."

Loeffler's goal for Kelley was to graduate the fast-punching (and talking) southpaw from basic cable to HBO before he fought for his first world title, but in the early-to-middle '90s HBO's focus was firmly on the heavyweight and middleweight divisions, as well as Olympic stars such as Jones and De La Hoya.

Still, Loeffler continually pushed his client to Lou DiBella, then the head of HBO's sports programming, though not as relentlessly as Kelley himself.

"Kevin always understood that he had to market himself," Loeffler said. "Obviously he could talk and he made himself accessible to the media but he also had a fan club and he created merchandise, like pencils, hats, shirts, key chains. He wasn't shy about selling himself to DiBella in person.

"He spotted Lou at a New York City club show a year or so before his HBO debut and he pretty much cornered him in the bathroom. Kevin is one of those guys who won't stop talking and he wouldn't stop talking to Lou. So Lou knew who Kevin was when the opportunity came to televise his first title shot against Gregorio Vargas."

Kelley was in his fifth year as a pro with a 36-0 record before his first spot on an HBO broadcast, an entertaining WBC title-winning effort against Vargas in December 1993. It was the co-featured bout to an uneventful heavyweight 10-rounder between Michael Moorer and Mike Evans.

Kelley's first defense, against Jesse Benavides, was also televised on HBO as the co-feature to Lennox Lewis' WBC heavyweight title defense against Phil Jackson in May '94.

"The heavyweights were not as exciting as Kevin's fights so HBO kept bringing him back as the opening bout of the Championship Boxing series and it was his goal to outshine the bigger men," Loeffler said.

EMERGING STAR?

Three reasons Diaz might become a star and three he might not.

STAR

1. Ability

His amateur background and versatile boxing style will take him far.

2. Winning personality

He's friendly outside of the ring, fearless inside it. Fans like that combination.

3. Big-time rivals

He's on track to challenge titleholders Gary Russell Jr. and Oscar Valdez.

★★★

MAYBE NOT

1. Size

Featherweights are often overlooked in the U.S.

2. "Vanilla" personality

He might be too polite to attract attention.

3. Politics

Promotional/network allegiances could prevent big fights.

Kelley helped open HBO's doors to lighter-weight boxers and his third title defense, against Alejandro Gonzalez in January '95, was the co-feature to a junior featherweight main event (Orlando Canizales vs. Wilfredo Vazquez). Kelley lost that fight but thanks to his penchant for dramatic bouts and several high-profile dance partners, he remained an HBO staple with matchups against Hamed, Morales, Barrera and Derrick Gainer.

Diaz's road to HBO exposure won't be as tough as it was for Kelley. The network, which broadcast his fight with Velez as part of the Andre Ward-Sullivan Barrera telecast (as well as the Alvarado bout and recent KO of Victor Proa on HBO Latino), already has an interest in him.

It's also unlikely that Diaz will take on the number of world-beaters and future Hall of Famers that Kelley faced, but he will need to fight the best available featherweights if he wants to become a regular face on HBO and gain recognition outside of boxing.

"Even great fighters need dance partners," Robert Diaz said. "Barrera needed Morales and Hamed. Barrera wouldn't be Barrera without those three fights with Morales. Joseph Diaz Jr.- Oscar Valdez could be the new trilogy that lights the sport on fire."

Valdez, a two-time Mexican Olympian and an amateur rival of Diaz (who narrowly outpointed Valdez in the 2011 World Championships), won the WBO featherweight title in July. The bilingual 25-year-old from Nogales has an aggressive, skillful style that's already captured the attention of Mexican fans and has hardcore fans buzzing about an eventual pro showdown with Diaz.

It could be a huge fight, but Diaz needs to equal his fellow Olympian and win a major title first. That, of course, is Diaz's plan.

"Cancio is my last step before fighting for a world title," Diaz told THE RING a few weeks before that fight took place. "... I want to be back in the ring in November or December and we're hoping that could be a

title-elimination bout. That way I start 2017 with a world title fight and I get to defend it for the rest of the year."

Golden Boy's original plan for Sept. 17 was to pit Diaz against Josh Warrington, one of the WBC's top featherweights, in a title-elimination bout. However, Warrington, according to Robert Diaz, is aiming for a shot at IBF beltholder Lee Selby.

"After Warrington turned down our offer, we went down the WBC rankings and offered the fight to each contender," Robert Diaz said. "(Cristian) Mijares said, 'No thank you.' Ronny Rios said there wasn't enough time to get ready. Robinson Castellanos had back issues and was planning to fight in an IBF title-elimination bout. We even went to Oscar Escandon, the interim WBC titleholder, but he wants to wait for the mandatory shot at Gary Russell."

Diaz, the WBC's No. 3 contender, does not want to wait too long for his shot at the green belt.

"If I had the opportunity to fight Russell on Sept. 17, I would have taken it," said Diaz.

Robert Diaz, who helped develop Russell, believes Diaz is ready for the current WBC titleholder and THE RING's No. 1-rated featherweight.

"I would put Joseph in with Gary Russell Jr. right now," he said. "I know Russell is a tremendous talent and a very skilled fighter but he went from zero fights to 24-0 fighting who? Diaz was brought up tough, fighting many different styles. I think he's ready. I would match him with Abner Mares today, no hesitation at all."

Mandatory title challenges aside, boxing politics will likely prevent Diaz from proving his matchmaker right or wrong against Russell or Mares for the foreseeable future. In the meantime, there are solid in-house bouts that can be made against Golden Boy's large featherweight roster.

"There's Julian Ramirez and Abraham Lopez," said Robert Diaz, who also mentioned Rios, Manuel Avila and unbeaten prospect Diego De La Hoya.

"Diego is watching Joseph," Robert Diaz said. "He was interviewed by Spanish TV while ringside at one of Diaz's recent fights. They asked him if he was there to support his Golden Boy stablemate. He told them, 'I'm here to see what he does because eventually I'm going to fight him.'"

Thanks in part to his last name, De La Hoya is the best-known featherweight (after Diaz) in the Golden Boy stable, but Peter Nelson, executive vice president of HBO Sports, isn't overly concerned about who Diaz fights on his way to a title and big fights as long as the opponents can compete with him.

"It's of paramount importance that the competition is there," Nelson said. "Star power without competition is beautiful plateware without a meal. It doesn't matter how talented someone is in his or her sport; it's the challenge that matters. It's the struggle. That's what people gravitate to. Quality fights are what fans remember. Take the Four Horsemen; these guys made each other great."

Nelson was referring to Sugar Ray Leonard, Roberto Duran, Thomas Hearns and Marvin Hagler, but he could just as well have been talking about the featherweight foursome of Barrera, Morales, Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez.

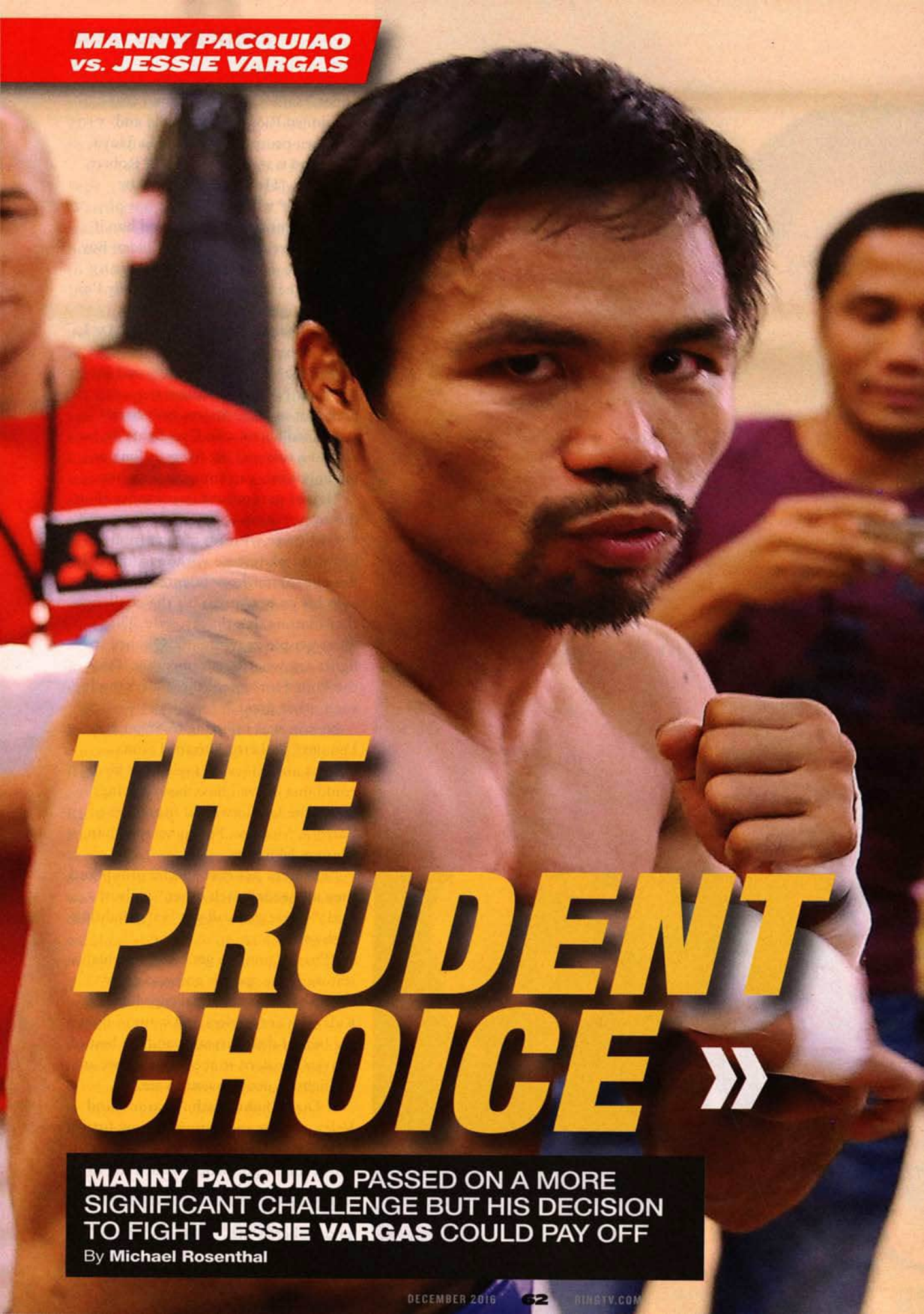
"Each era has that special group and they all needed each other," Nelson said. "These guys all got better fighting each other.

"Diaz is going to get better and his stature in the sport is going to grow because he wants to challenge himself. Kids who are fearless and want to fight the best of their divisions and the best of heavier divisions in the future, those are the fighters people want to see."

If Diaz's fights with Alvarado and Velez are any indication of how future showdowns with Valdez and De La Hoya might go, people will want to see him.

"Die-hards know who he is," said Robert Diaz. "Now it's time to introduce him to the world." RING

Diaz is on the cusp of a title, meaning we'll soon know how good he really is.



THE PRUDENT CHOICE »

MANNY PACQUIAO PASSED ON A MORE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE BUT HIS DECISION TO FIGHT **JESSIE VARGAS** COULD PAY OFF

By **Michael Rosenthal**

Manny Pacquiao evidently had a simple choice for his next opponent: Terence Crawford or Jessie Vargas. He chose the latter.

The decision makes sense from a business standpoint – as we'll explore here later – but it leaves one of the great fighters of this generation open to criticism for an obvious reason: Pacquiao chose the path of least resistance.

Pacquiao's fans can argue that the 37-year-old has earned the right to bypass a thoroughbred like Crawford in favor of a more beatable foe at this point of his career. After all, he has invested more than his share of blood and guts for our entertainment over the past two decades.

The problem with that logic is that Pacquiao is not a badly faded veteran who is clinging to relevance solely because of his name, a pathetic position in which so many stars end up. He demonstrated against Tim Bradley in April that he remains a very good fighter.

The oddsmakers probably would've made Crawford the favorite based on his speed and all-around ability but it would not have been a mismatch. Pacquiao still has the ability to push anyone not named Floyd Mayweather Jr.

For this reason, at least a part of Pacquiao must've had reservations about bypassing the stiffer, much more intriguing challenge. The man has pride.

Pacquiao vs. Crawford would've been one of the most important matchups of his career, one more chance to accomplish something special. Pacquiao vs. Vargas is just another fight, which is disappointing for those of us who have come to expect more from him.

In other words, Pacquiao never dodged anyone – until now.

Manny Pacquiao (previous page) might've been thinking long-term when he decided to fight Jessie Vargas.

MGM GRAND

However, lest we be too harsh, the decision is sound strictly in terms of dollars and cents. The basic business model used in boxing is simple: Seek the most reward for the least risk.

Pacquiao-Crawford probably wouldn't generate significantly higher pay-per-view numbers than Pacquiao-Vargas, so why go that direction if economics is your prime motivation? The risk of fighting Crawford would be too great given the reward.

More important, a victory in Pacquiao's next fight could lead directly to the most lucrative bout possible: a second meeting with Mayweather.

No one can blame Pacquiao for chasing as much money as possible as his Hall of Fame career winds down; he only has a few more big paydays remaining in his body. Almost every big-name fighter does it.

And while a second fight with Mayweather is the last thing many fans want to see after the profound disappointment of their May 2, 2015, debacle, it would be still be an enormous event.

If they made only half of what they made from the first fight, Mayweather and Pacquiao would walk away with around $125 million and $60 million, respectively. That latter number is very likely the main reason he chose Vargas over Crawford. He can't afford to lose.

That's called good business even if it is also what some have called it: a money grab.

And, from a competitive standpoint, Pacquiao would love the chance to face Mayweather with a healthy shoulder. I believe we'd get the exact same result – a boring, one-sided decision in favor of Mayweather – but Pacquiao and his handlers undoubtedly feel otherwise.

Of course, a lot has to happen for Pacquiao-Mayweather II to take place.

One, Pacquiao has to beat Vargas.

Pacquiao obviously would like another crack at Floyd Mayweather Jr. with a healthy shoulder.

BIG-TIME SUCCESS

Manny Pacquiao has built his reputation by fighting – and beating – only the best possible opponents. Jessie Vargas will be his 20th opponent to have held at least one major world title in his career. And Pacquiao faced four of them (Tim Bradley, Juan Manuel Marquez, Erik Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera) more than once. Here's a look at the numbers:

12-4-1
Record against likely future Hall of Famers

20-5-2
Record against world titleholders

19-3-2
Record in world title fights (including RING and sanctioning body titles)

8-2-1
Record against RING Magazine titleholders

4-3
Record in his last seven fights

And that's not a given. The WBO welterweight titleholder was a good amateur who has long garnered respect as a professional. And, at 27, he appears to be peaking.

He lost a unanimous decision to the slick Bradley in June of last year but, with newfound punching power, almost took the eventual winner out in the final seconds of the fight. (Bradley took Pacquiao the distance three times.)

And Vargas built on that by breaking down and then stopping then-unbeaten Sadam Ali to win the vacant WBO title in March. He never looked better.

The downside for Vargas is that he's not nearly as talented as Pacquiao is. He doesn't have the speed of a Mayweather (or Crawford). And he doesn't have the skills of a Juan Manuel Marquez, who has given Pacquiao so much trouble over the years. He's very good, not special.

Pacquiao will be a significant favorite and probably will win a clear decision, which would set up the Mayweather fight.

That is if Mayweather decides he wants the fight, which also is not a given. "Money" has plenty of money as it is and seems to be transitioning into his next career as a promoter. At the very least, there was no concrete reason at our press time to believe he'll fight again.

The potential payday is powerful motivation for him to step back into the ring one more time, though. Even if you're filthy rich, $100 million-plus is a lot of money. And if it means anything, Mayweather probably would like to finish his career at a nice, round 50-0.

I'm guessing that if the opportunity is there, Mayweather will take it.

And if he doesn't? Well, maybe we'd get Pacquiao-Crawford after all. Pacquiao wouldn't earn anywhere near the money he'd make against Mayweather but a victory over one of the top young fighters in the world would be a heck of a way to go out.

IMPRESSIVELY UNIMPRESSIVE

YOU MIGHT NOT LIKE TO WATCH **ANDRE WARD** FIGHT BUT HE GETS THE JOB DONE

By **Andreas Hale**

If you watched Andre Ward's one-sided dissection of the unheralded Alexander Brand on Aug. 6, you likely took away very little from the fight.

The fact it went the distance was frustrating for those who know that Brand had no business being in the ring with a fighter of Ward's class. How could one of the best pound-for-pound boxers allow a 40-year-old journeyman fighting above his natural weight to survive for 12 uneventful rounds?

Simple: It was just another chapter in the impressively unimpressive work

Andre Ward has the ability to frustrate his opponents and the fans.

of Andre Ward.

What does that mean? Andre Ward is Andre Ward no matter who he is fighting. He doesn't take risks or even venture outside of his comfort zone. He's a counterpuncher who takes advantage of the mistakes his opponents make. That's the reason he put together a scintillating performance in knocking out Chad Dawson but looked so-so against Sullivan Barrera and Brand. He'll take care of business if you come to him, as Dawson did; he will simply outbox you if you don't.

If you watch with a keen eye and appreciate the tiny nuances that make a boxer a ring general, then you can enjoy watching Ward fight. If you want blood and guts, Ward isn't your guy. And you should probably stop complaining about it because it's never, ever going to change.

What Ward did against Brand was vintage Andre Ward but it did little to build momentum for his showdown against Sergey Kovalev on Nov. 19 in Las Vegas. Ward never planned to do anything different from what he needed to do against Brand, who had not been knocked out in any of his previous 26 fights. He pitched a shutout but nobody watching was happy about it, except for Team Ward.

The dissatisfaction is not limited to his style. It's also the opponents he has faced since returning to the ring after a year and a half hiatus: Paul Smith in 2015 and Barrera and Brand this year. They amounted to tomato cans.

DAVID SPAGNOLA/MAIN EVENTS

It was difficult to read Sergey Kovalev (left) and Ward in their most recent fights and during this staredown.

And tomato cans are supposed to be crushed.

Ward did stop Smith in the ninth round of their fight, Ward's first in 19 months, but Barrera and Brand survived to the final bell. And that's the norm. Ward has knocked out only two of his last 10 opponents, which stretches over seven years.

For some reason, we have fooled ourselves into thinking that Ward is somebody else when the same Andre Ward has been here all along. He's dominating to the point that it is boring. The drama is sucked out of the arena the moment Ward steps into the ring because not a single opponent has figured out how to take him out of his comfort zone.

Sergey Kovalev might be different from the rest.

The hard-punching Russian possesses the ability to force Ward to fight rather than cruise. At any given moment, Kovalev, a big puncher, could put Ward on the canvas with a clean punch, and rest assured that Ward is aware of the danger. This isn't to say that Ward won't figure out how to neutralize all of Kovalev's weapons on fight night and dance the same dance we're used to seeing. But this might be a rare opportunity to see Ward do something different because he is forced to.

But until Nov. 19 comes, all we can do is hope. We can criticize Ward's impressively unimpressive performances all we want and suggest that he be knocked down a peg from the pound-for-pound rankings because of the quality of opposition. But Ward will still be Ward, pitching shutouts and absorbing little damage.

You may be upset about it but Ward isn't. And as long as he remains undefeated and his bank account swells, there's nothing anybody not named Sergey Kovalev can do about it.

APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION

THE MOVIE 'HANDS OF STONE' SHOWS A **ROBERTO DURAN** WHOSE FATEFUL DECISION IN HIS 1980 FIGHT AGAINST **RAY LEONARD** HAD DEEP-SEATED ORIGINS

By **Brian Harty**

"Hunger" is a helpful word to describe how fighters drag themselves out of bed to train. We get it when hunger is used like that. What's more difficult to understand is a fighter who says, "No, really, I'm fighting because I'm *hungry*."

In the movie "Hands of Stone," hunger – as in "no food" – is pervasive even after it has been solved by wealth. It is what drives a prepubescent Roberto Duran into a Panama City boxing gym and what fuels his rise to a pair of welterweight championship fights against Sugar Ray Leonard, the second of which produced one of the most controversial moments in the history of televised sports.

Duran vs. Leonard II, now and forever known as the "No Mas Fight" after Duran quit in the eighth round, is the film's main event, but the path to reach it seems less like a hero's journey ending in disgrace than an argument for reasonable doubt. It's not concerned with the controversy over what Duran actually said, only with what he did, why he did it and the consequences. And reasons are to be found in the mind, not the ring.

"That to me was enough of a theme for a movie," said the film's director, Jonathan Jakubowicz, who is from Venezuela. "It's all about what's going on in the battles with their brains and I just thought there's something very unique about the way those two fights happened that show the strategy with which they were won and the strategy with which they were lost."

In the opening scene it's 1971 and legendary trainer Ray Arcel, retired for 18 years, ambles down the aisleway at Madison Square Garden to watch Duran, undefeated in 24

The actors (left to right) Edgar Ramirez, Robert De Niro and Ruben Blades played Roberto Duran, Ray Arcel and Carlos Eleta in "Hands of Stone." Usher Raymond played Sugar Ray Leonard (inset).

Director Jonathan Jakubowicz (center) said some in the U.S. were reluctant to support a film in which the lead character is beating Americans.

contests, fight Benny Huertas. Arcel is played by Robert De Niro, who is able to convey Arcel's homecoming before a single word of explanation is spoken. The 73-year-old actor, 36 years removed from his role in the most analyzed boxing movie of all time and now more Spencer Tracy than Raging Bull, enters the arena – enters the boxing movie – with the tolerant weariness of somebody who expects to see nothing new.

What Arcel sees, though, is the rare blend of grace and violence that marks a potential champion.

In the locker room after the fight, Duran, played marvelously by Venezuelan actor Edgar Ramirez, gorges on the spoils of his victory: a tray with 31 flavors of ice cream. His adolescent glee quickly swings to patriotic machismo as the American trainer is introduced to him by his manager, Carlos Aleta (Ruben Blades).

All the themes are laid out in that scene: ego, pride, contempt, the tenacity of childhood and the insatiable appetite that would be both Duran's greatest asset and his most corrosive enemy. They are the things that work for him as weapons but also sit in plain sight for anyone attentive enough to exploit them as weaknesses. Arcel sums it up with the bit of wisdom that will be the film's mantra: It's all in the mind.

And that's the foundation of "Hands of Stone." It features boxing, yes, but essentially it's a movie about ice cream.

"He never left that instinct that once you have food in front of you, you must eat it, because you don't know when you're going to have it again," said Jakubowicz. "Part of his generosity and what makes him a great human being is also part of his weakness as an athlete – that he was never more of an athlete than he was a human being. And as a human being he could never overcome the childhood that he spent in hunger."

In the movie, the child version of Duran is always running. The flashback setting is 1964 on the border between the Panama Canal Zone where relatively wealthy Americans live and the slum where the Panamanians live, a tense proximity that will soon boil over. Duran's daily life revolves around one thing: food. To get it he steals and then runs.

When he is not running, he is fighting. He fights with the bravado needed to survive on the streets, taunting his victims as cowards and showing contempt for "dancing" vs. fighting. He has a talent for brutality that grows with each victory because after each victory there is food. That talent attracts the attention of local trainer Plomo Quinones (Pedro Perez), who attempts to teach the young brawler some technique.

"I'll learn whatever you want as long as you keep buying me ice cream," says Duran.

What works for him then works again in 1980, when he drills his way into Leonard's head before their first fight by taunting him as a dancer and a clown and insulting his wife in public.

It triggers Sugar Ray's own weakness – the idea that he is just flash, not a true fighter who can punish the transgressor – and tricks him into the darker realm where Duran thrives.

Jakubowicz said the whole scenario landed him in his own psychological battle just to get the movie made, as people in the U.S. were reluctant to support a movie in which the lead actor is kicking Americans' asses.

And not just beating Americans, but reviling them. The canal itself is an ever-present open wound felt by Duran and he delights in every stolen mango and seethes over every Panamanian humiliated by poverty. To become a hero to his countrymen, to become Robin Hood, to take money with his fists and feed everyone in sight (after a few gold watches and a mansion for himself, of course), is the most potent party-fuel he knows. And Duran guzzles that fuel like a 747.

Arcel, meanwhile, struggles to keep the volatile man-child on track while trying to protect him behind the scenes from the predatory moves of Aleta and Don King and also deal

with his own mafia-related problems. Arcel's words, many taken from actual press conference transcripts, are prophetic of the same issues that now trouble boxing.

The true guides in the movie are the wives, though. It is Duran's wife, Felicidad (Ana de Armas), who tells him he should target and destroy Leonard, played by singer Usher Raymond, the "symbol of American sports." In a mirroring scene before the second fight it is Leonard's wife, Juanita (Jurnee Smollett-Bell), who tells him that the key to beating Duran is to humiliate him. Arcel's wife, Stephanie (Ellen Barkin), helps the conflicted trainer choose his direction.

"The reality is, Duran's wife is the mastermind of Duran's every move," said Jakubowicz. "She really was the head behind the man and so was Juanita for Leonard at that point in his life. And Stephanie was the soul of Ray Arcel. I always conceived it as a movie where weak men appear strong and have strong women next to them, and I think it's the case with many successful athletes. There's something about the person who goes to bed with you that needs to be the one who recharges your ability to think straight and your ability to gain your strength back."

The cast is good and thankfully includes nobody limping through pools of light muttering, "Don't end up like me, kid" (you're more likely to hear salsa music in a Panama gym, said Jakubowicz), but "Hands of Stone" does fall into some of the common patterns of boxing movies. In the fight scenes, for example, every punch sounds like the door of a '74 Eldorado slamming and the action is framed so tightly and moves so quickly that it often relies on soundbites from the ringside commentary to tell you who's winning.

But Jakubowicz is clearly juggling "movie boxing" and boxing knowledge. The camera pays attention to details that give a sense of the mauling power in Duran's attacks and the differences, such as Leonard's footwork, from one fight to another. And Ramirez does a nice job of reproducing Duran's style, which makes sense because he'd never boxed before and was trained by the fighter's sons ("He doesn't know how to box any other way," said Jakubowicz). Same with Raymond, who worked with Leonard himself.

The film's most visible flaw is that it tries to do too much. In some cases it conserves space by using shorthand, such as cross-cutting between Arcel's advice about strategy ("Only you decide when to strike.") and Duran's courtship with Felicidad, and mixing the series of subsequent fights with the series of subsequent births. Those mash-ups also attempt to show the flipside of Duran's ring persona, which is well served by Ramirez's ability to portray sweetness as easily as he does violence.

Despite the movie's breakneck pace, though, it still can't cover enough ground. Some storylines, such as Duran's relationship with his father and Arcel's unexpected reunion with his daughter, suffer from underdevelopment and leave the impression of a lack of focus.

But in its primary goal "Hands of Stone" attains something unique.

In the aftermath of his greatest victory, with so much now available to him, Duran's excesses get more extreme as his own appetite moves beyond food, and we can clearly see why. When Duran says he doesn't really want to fight Leonard again but the rematch is rushed anyway, we can see why. When Duran tries again to enrage Leonard before the second fight but a wiser Leonard responds with smiles, we understand why. When Duran cracks, reverts to compulsive eating and crumbles in the ring as Sugar Ray "dances" circles around him, we can understand why.

And when Duran turns away and waves his glove in the eighth round, we have an idea of what he might've been thinking.

It's all in the mind.

"The bottom line with 'No Mas' is what happened before and what happened during the fight," said Jakubowicz. "How much he didn't want to fight, and how much he was forced to fight, and how humiliated he felt by a Leonard who was playing the mind games that he thought he was the only one who could play. So he didn't realize that Leonard was playing him. He thought he was simply making fun of him.

"It was a gesture of machismo, of 'F--- you all' that was perceived – and will go down for eternity – as a gesture of cowardice and quitting."

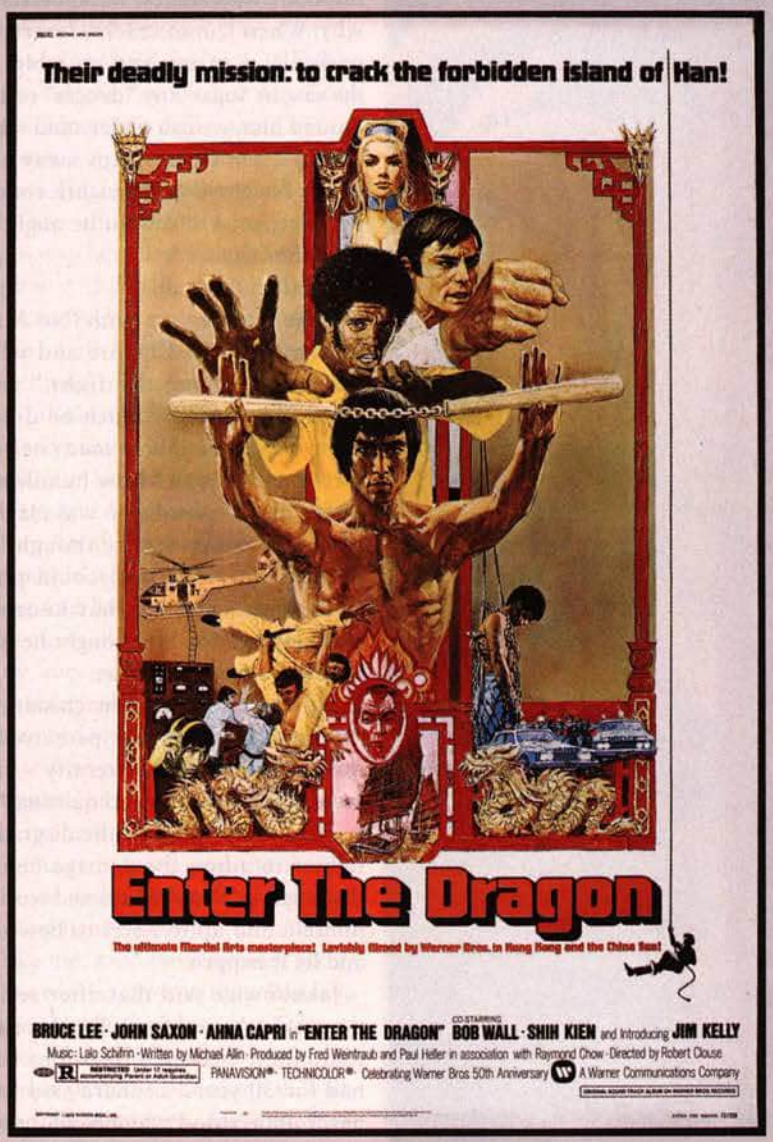
After that, it's up to the disgraced fighter to admit the damage he did that night in New Orleans and reclaim himself, and up to Arcel to bow out and let it happen.

Jakubowicz said that after seeing the movie, the real Sugar Ray Leonard told him it answered questions he'd had for 30 years. Leonard said he'd never understood why he, who grew up in poverty, had been taunted as a rich kid by Duran and his fans.

"(Leonard) understood a lot of what he did right, that he instinctively felt he did, but he understood completely what it took to beat Duran at his own game," said Jakubowicz. "It gave me a lot of closure to hear him say, 'I really feel that I understand what happened that night, and I didn't before.' And I think that's the biggest compliment I've ever gotten." RING

Jakubowicz gives instruction to David Arosemena, who played the fiery young Duran.

MUHAMMAD ALI VS. BRUCE LEE: THE BATTLE OF ICONS



WHAT WOULD'VE HAPPENED HAD THESE TWO LEGENDS MET IN THE RING?

By **Tom Gray**

On July 20, 1973, the great martial-arts movie star Bruce Lee mysteriously died in Hong Kong. A cerebral edema (swelling of the brain) had claimed the life of this extraordinarily gifted 32-year-old, who would achieve posthumous superstardom when his seminal movie "Enter the Dragon" was released in U.S. theaters the following month.

Almost 8,000 miles away, in Deer Lake, Pennsylvania, Muhammad Ali was training hard to avenge his second professional defeat. Ken Norton, a former Marine, had broken his jaw and outpointed him in March 1973. And if he could repeat the feat, then Ali's career would be in serious jeopardy.

Norton didn't. On Sept. 10, Ali scored a close split-decision victory at The Forum in Inglewood, California, which is only a half hour's drive from Grauman's (now TCL) Chinese Theater, where "Enter the Dragon" had premiered 22 days earlier. Although indirect, that is perhaps the closest these two incredible forces of nature ever came to one another.

They share an almost mystical fan affection because of their unique fighting skills, which are sometimes overlooked because of their impact on worldwide culture. With that, the recent passing of Ali and some Ali-Lee chatter on social media in mind, we thought it would be interesting to explore a mythical "Battle of Icons."

Lee was a boxing fan. In 1972, a telephone conversation was recorded by one of his first-generation students, Daniel Lee (no relation). During the chat, Lee can be heard referencing boxers for the first and, as far as this reporter is aware, only time in terms of available audio.

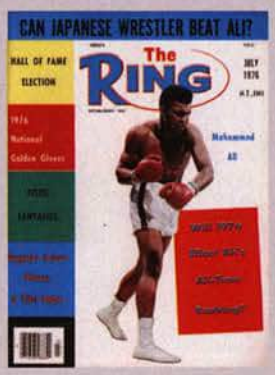
"Joe Frazier, there's a man who is capable of using his tools and who is very determined in a savage, relentless attack," said Lee of the then-reigning heavyweight champion before taking a swipe at one of Frazier's predecessors. "Have you seen kickboxing? I saw it in Thailand. Well, the problem with (them) is that they are the 'John L. Sullivans' of the feet. I mean, no finesse."

One can understand where Lee was coming from but while Sullivan didn't impress him, the likes of Muhammad Ali and Jersey Joe Walcott most certainly did. "Game of Death" co- stars Dan Inosanto and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who were students of Lee, discussed Ali with their master on several occasions and the fluency of his footwork was what always caught Lee's eye.

Watch Lee in any of his movies and

you'll get frequent glimpses of swift lateral movement. Like Ali, Lee was electric when he got up on his toes and his grace was something to behold. That didn't come from nowhere. Lee's widow, Linda Lee Cadwell, recalls "The Dragon" diligently studying Ali, as well as countless other boxing champions, on 8-millimeter film.

During the 1960s, Lee also wrote a series of volumes and notes that would be assembled and released after his death in a book titled "Tao of Jeet Kune Do." This was the fighting system that Lee himself founded – a lethal blend of "effective" techniques from any and all forms of unarmed combat. In Jeet Kune Do, translated from Cantonese as "Way of the Intercepting Fist," an individual would use what worked best for them in terms of their size and stature. This philosophy was arguably the precursor to mixed martial arts.



"The lead jab is a 'feeler,'" wrote Lee in a chapter of the book entitled "Tools." "It is the basis of all other blows, a loose, easy stinger. It is a whip rather than a club. (Muhammad) Ali's theory is to picture hitting a fly with a swatter."

For Lee to reference Ali in these unique writings speaks volumes about his appreciation of the eventual three-time heavyweight champion.

Ali fought outside of boxing rules only once and it was an unmitigated disaster. In June 1976, he ventured to Japan to take on a famous wrestler named Antonio Inoki. Why? Because he was offered $6 million for what appeared to be an exhibition with a joke-laden buildup. The problem was that Ali arrived at the Budokan Hall to face off with Inoki and nobody was laughing.

The heavyweight champ had trained briefly in Tae Kwon Do under the watchful eye of one of Bruce Lee's closest friends, Grand Master Jhoon Rhee, and claimed to have developed the "Accu-Punch." He needn't have bothered. Prior to the bout, a ludicrous set of rules were put in place that prevented Inoki from attempting takedowns, submissions or kicks above the waist. What was left? The Japanese giant kicked at Ali's legs for 15 rounds and absorbed a handful of jabs. To credit this as a mixed martial arts event, as some do, is overpraise. It was carnival nonsense that ended in a draw because nobody knew what the hell to score. Ali was later hospitalized with blood clots.

So what if Ali and Lee had gotten together? Unlike the Inoki affair, we can choose our rules. In a straight boxing match, Lee, a 5-foot-7 lightweight, or junior welterweight at best, would have no chance. One punch from Ali could potentially break his neck and no rational person would claim otherwise. Western boxing was a part of Lee's game but he was no world champion and the weight differential makes such a matchup ludicrous to the point of being insulting.

Things change dramatically in a mixed martial arts bout. If Lee can use legs, then he has the power, skill and quickness to hurt Ali badly. A sidekick to the knee is longer than any punch you care to mention and a boxer has no way of defending against it. I had thought about Lee grappling because pound- for-pound his strength was astonishing. But would he really have been stronger than Ali? Let's be real here – he wouldn't.

The one thing that cannot be ignored in all this is that Lee was not a professional fighter. Ask yourself, did he have a good chin? Did he have a good engine in a fight? Did he cut easy? Did he fade when the going got tough? We don't know the answers to those questions because outside of third-party accounts and sparring exhibitions there is no evidence one way or the other.

Personally, I feel that Benny Urquidez, a legendary multi-weight world champion in full-contact martial arts, would have been too much for Lee. Why? Because he was a brilliant and seasoned professional who took hits for a living. There is no substitute for absorbing punishment and firing back. And if you're not accustomed to that – you will lose. And how about Lee against modern UFC stars? The same problems would exist.

Lee was all about taking care of business on the street – in seconds. He was persistently challenged by stuntmen on the set of "Enter the Dragon," and let's just say he emerged undefeated amid a shower of blood and teeth. There just happens to be a difference between those types of encounters and a showdown against a combat athlete.

If we're talking about potential, then there is no doubt that Lee could have been a magnificent professional fighter. With his innovative approach to the martial arts, his uncanny ability to master whatever he was shown in minutes and those incredible physical tools, he might have transcended boxing, or UFC, just as he did action cinema. As a martial artist, Lee is the closest thing to perfection that I've ever seen and I doubt that will change in my lifetime.

The influence Ali had on him is undeniable. Had Lee lived, it is almost certain that the pair would have crossed paths, but his untimely demise meant that their acquaintanceship, much like this fan-fueled superfight, would be confined to fantasy. What would Ali have made of Lee? Providing the egos didn't clash, this would have been a match made in heaven. Both struggled through adversity and racism, both transcended cultural and nationalistic boundaries, both were wonderfully charismatic and both were astonishingly gifted in their respective fields.

Whatever the outcome, the "Battle of Icons" would've been one hell of an event.

Tom Gray is a U.K. correspondent/ contributing editor for RingTV. com and a member of THE RING ratings panel. Follow him on Twitter @Tom_ Gray_Boxing

'Did Barbra Streisand Whup Sonny Liston?'

A CHAPTER FROM THOMAS HAUSER'S NEW BOOK 'MUHAMMAD ALI: A TRIBUTE TO THE GREATEST'

On February 7, 1996, I was in the lobby of the ANA-Westin Hotel in Washington DC with Muhammad Ali, Jim Brown, Ralph Boston, and a handful of others. That night, HBO would present a promotional screening of *The Journey of the African-American Athlete*. In anticipation of the event, ten people had been invited to the White House to meet with President Clinton in the Oval Office. My name was on the list, along with Nancy Bronson, whom I'd been dating for six months. The mini-bus that would take us to the White House was pulling up to the hotel when Seth Abraham (then president of Time Warner Sports) approached me with a look of consternation.

"Didn't anybody tell you?"

"Tell me what?"

"Yesterday, the White House took you and Nancy off the guest list. You've been replaced by Zina Garrison and Calvin Hill."

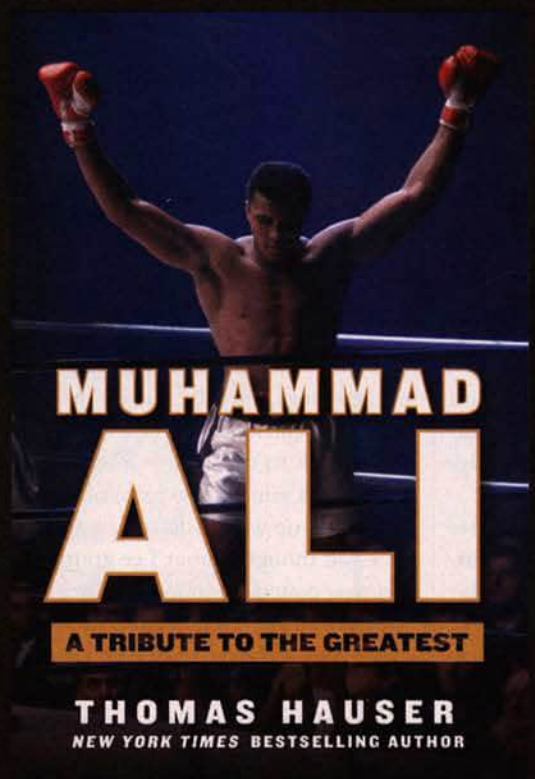
Seth was apologetic.

Nancy was accepting.

And Muhammad was ... Well, Muhammad was Muhammad.

"Stay by me. I'll get you into the White House."

"Don't waste your time," Paul Costello (Time Warner's point man in Washington) told us. "No one just walks into the Oval Office. In fact, no one gets past the White House gate without advance security clearance. All that will happen is, you'll have to turn around and take a cab back to the hotel."



Which seemed likely. But Nancy and I had nothing to lose, so we boarded the mini-bus with the others. When we arrived at the first security checkpoint by a wrought-iron gate outside the White House, a guard asked for ID's from everybody. Five minutes passed. Several limousines drove by. Then the guard returned.

"There's two people who don't have security clearance. Who are Hauser and Bronson?"

Nancy and I raised our hands.

"Come with me, please."

Nancy and I got off the mini-bus and followed the guard to the security booth where I pleaded our cause. "I was told on Monday that we'd been approved by the White House ... No one told us our names had been taken off the list ..."

The guard was polite but unyielding. "I'm sorry; you can't go any further."

At which point, Muhammad joined us.

The guard repeated what he'd just said. "Mr. Ali; this man and this woman don't have security clearance. I'm sure you understand how these things work. They simply can't go any further."

And Muhammad was understanding – "If they don't go, I ain't going."

Unsure as to what to do next, the guard telephoned the White House. Minutes later, an official-looking man with a mustache strode down to the gate to meet us.

"What seems to be the problem?" Obviously, he already knew what the problem was because, before I could answer, we were advised, "Look, this is my event. Your names aren't on the list, and that's the end of it. No one without security clearance is allowed past this gate."

"But these are my friends."

"Mr. Ali; you don't understand."

Nancy got back on the mini-bus, and Paul Costello came over to monitor the proceedings. There followed an explanation about

how Barbra Streisand had recently been invited to the White House. *The* Barbra Streisand, who had helped raise millions of dollars for the Democratic party and was a personal friend of the President and Mrs. Clinton. Yet when Ms. Streisand brought someone with her for her appointment with the President, her friend was turned away at the gate.

And Muhammad was duly impressed.

"Did Barbra Streisand whup Joe Frazier?"

"Mr. Ali –"

"Did Barbra Streisand whup Sonny Liston?"

The Man With The Mustache, who I'm sure is a fine public servant and was just trying to do his job, excused himself and returned moments later. "All right; we've got to get this show on the road, so you two [pointing to Nancy and me] can go as far as the reception area, but that's all."

The mini-bus proceeded to the West Wing of the White House, where we were ushered into a reception area. There was small talk. Several minutes passed. Then The Man With The Mustache reappeared.

"Those of you with security clearance, come with me into the Roosevelt Room. You two [pointing to Nancy and me], stay here."

The members of the group with security clearance were ushered into the Roosevelt Room, directly across the corridor from the Oval Office. Nancy and I stayed in the reception area, settling on a sofa. Inside the Roosevelt Room, various cabinet members, presidential aides, and White House staffers had gathered for a "photo op" with Muhammad.

Except Muhammad wasn't there. He was with Nancy and me in the reception area beneath a painting of "George Washington Crossing the Delaware."

Which is how Nancy and I got into the Roosevelt Room.

"But I'm telling you now," The Man With The Mustache warned. "You are not going into the Oval Office, and I mean it."

And he did mean it.

When the time came to enter the President's office, The Man With The Mustache approached. "You two [Nancy and me], sit over there [pointing to the far side of the conference table]."

He waited until we'd followed his command.

"Now, I'd like the rest of you to line up over here."

At which point, I said to Nancy, "Look; there's no way that both of us will make it into the Oval Office. When the others go in, just walk over to Muhammad and take his arm."

"What about you?"

"I'll stay here."

"That's not fair to you."

"Sure, it is. I've been to the White House. I already have a photo of me with the President."

"Not in the Oval Office."

"It doesn't matter. You can go into the office for both of us."

Across the corridor, the door to the Oval Office opened. We saw the President of the United States standing there.

The line started to move forward.

Nancy got up from the sofa, walked over to Muhammad, and with considerable trepidation took his arm –

The Man With The Mustache walked over to Nancy, and stood in front of her. "Mr. Ali," he importuned. "The President of the United States is waiting for you."

And Muhammad walked forward, alone.

Nancy and I watched from a distance as the President greeted his guests. Then the door to the Oval Office closed, and we were left in the Roosevelt Room.

I was disappointed. I won't tell you I wasn't. For a while, we explored our surroundings, which was kind of fun. If you're ever in the Roosevelt Room, I suggest you look at the gold medallion given to Teddy Roosevelt in 1906 when he won the Nobel Peace Prize. Also, check out the bronze sculpture by Alexander Pope, and the portraits of Teddy, Franklin, and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Nancy did her best to put a good face on things. "Tom; this is really very exciting. We're having a wonderful time in Washington with Muhammad. We're in the White House. We saw the President from a few yards away. Don't feel bad for me."

But I did feel bad, for both of us.

Muhammad and the others stayed in the Oval Office for about ten minutes. Then the door to the President's office opened and they filed out, moving down an adjacent corridor.

Jim Brown ... Ralph Boston ... Calvin Hill ... Zina Garrison ...

All but one.

Finally, Muhammad Ali walked out of the Oval Office ... leading the President of the United States by the arm toward the Roosevelt Room.

"These are my friends," Muhammad told him.

Bill Clinton smiled and beckoned us forward with a wave of his arm toward the Oval Office.

"Come on in."

The minutes that followed will remain forever etched in my mind. The President began by asking Nancy her name. Then he turned to me. We chatted briefly. The President was warm and gracious. Eventually, he even called in a photographer. But what I remember most about that afternoon, and always will, is something I've seen many times; something that has been on display for the entire world for almost four decades – the sweetness, the determination, the power, and the magic of Muhammad Ali.

This article has been excerpted from "Muhammad Ali: A Tribute to The Greatest" by Thomas Hauser. The book can be purchased at Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com and in most major bookstores.

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Nicola Adams has become a significant figure in the U.K. because of her success and personality.

PERFECT ROLE MODEL

GOLD MEDAL WINNER **NICOLA ADAMS** IS LEADING MANY TO BOXING

Winning smile only getting wider, brighter, Nicola Adams made history again this summer when she became the first female boxer to successfully defend an Olympic title. The 33-year-old from Leeds, England, defeated Sarah Ourahmoune of France in the final, a win that delivered the Great Britain boxing team their only gold medal of the Games and brought the victor one step closer to being anointed Dame Nicola Adams in the near future.

"She has done tremendously well," said Team GB coach Rob McCracken. "She's a role model for boxers and especially female boxers in the U.K. She's the current world and Olympic champion. I don't think there are too many in sport who can say they are the current world and Olympic champion."

The Nicola Adams legacy should not be underestimated or played down. The ripple effect caused by her gold medal triumph in London in 2012 was considerable and has led many young girls in Britain to their local boxing gyms for fitness or competition. What's more, Adams is in so many ways the ideal role model for these females. She's clean-cut, she's personable, she's always upbeat and she can also really fight. To those who scoff at women's boxing, or believe it to be in some way inferior, take one look at Adams' textbook technique and tell me she doesn't deserve to be admired, studied, copied.

"It's nice to be known as a role model and for kids to look up to me," she said. "I'd love to think they're coming into boxing after seeing me compete. That's great for the future of female boxing.

"I actually had a little girl come up to me and say she had been doing ballet for the last five years but saw me win my Olympic gold and now she's boxing. It's nice to hear. There were people who didn't even know boxing existed before the 2012 Olympics, but now everybody knows about women's boxing.

"I was just happy with the reception it received. I couldn't

believe so many Britons fell in love with me after winning the gold medal in London. It was fantastic."

Despite the increase in competition this year and the possibility of a sophomore slump, McCracken never doubted Adams for a second. He, too, is full of admiration.

"She loves the sport," he said. "She loves being in the gym. She's in the gym all the time. You'd have thought there'd be a motivation problem once she won the Olympic gold medal but keeping her out of the gym is half the battle. She's thoroughly professional. She lives for boxing. She has done tremendously well since she won gold in London."

Adams will be 37 by the time the next Olympic Games comes around, leaving her with a big decision to make in the coming months. She's the biggest female star in British boxing by some distance and one of the most recognizable faces in British sport but is well aware that success in the professional game may not be as easy, nor as rewarding.

In fact, given the dearth of professional female boxers and opportunities, Adams may turn to acting and would favor an action-movie role.

"The options are open at the moment," she said. "There's Tokyo (Olympics in 2020), there's turning professional, there's acting. I'm just not sure which one I'll do yet."

JOE JOYCE AND JOSHUA BUATSI

There were no golds for the men of Great Britain at the Olympic Games but, in super-heavyweight Joe Joyce and light heavyweight Joshua Buatsi, stars may have been born. Joyce grabbed silver and Buatsi grabbed bronze. More important, both seemed to carry the style and spite necessary for a successful professional career, should that feature in their plans, and produced knockouts and entertainment in Rio.

Joshua Buatsi was able to stop Kennedy Katende (across the ring) of Uganda in an opening-round bout but had to settle for a bronze medal.

Buatsi, 23, was born in Accra, Ghana, but raised in Croydon, south London and it was here he first found the urge to box. Fifteen at the time, he would slip on a pair of boxing gloves and spar his friends on the green in his estate, each of the boys keen to prove they were the best of the lot. He combined this with soccer, utilizing his physique and presence as a center-forward but, in the end, it was the boxing gym that most captivated Buatsi.

"I felt it was different to all the sports I'd ever done," he told me. "I was OK at them. I competed at a decent level. But there was something different about combat sports. That will to win, how there can only be one winner, there's something different about that. Boxing has taught me a lot. It humbles me even more. That's what I'm really happy about."

In addition to humbling Buatsi, boxing also provided him with a path and sense of discipline many of his peers lacked. Indeed, a number of the boys he knocked around with on the green all those years ago fell away from the boxing dream and have taken an alternative, darker route through life.

"The environment I grew up in was very distracting," Buatsi said. "There were different things to do, good and bad things. Gangs were about. Anytime you go about and there's more than two of you, they call it a 'gang.' I had a group of friends but we weren't a gang. I wasn't into drugs, drinking or smoking or anything like that. We did what we had to do and sometimes it wasn't necessarily the right thing.

"I found boxing, though, and it took away all the free time I had. Once I started it, I couldn't get out of it. Every bit of free time I had went into it. Mike Tyson said it's the biggest drug and that's what it is. Winning, doing well, you just want more and more. You can't get enough. I just hope I can do well and help the people around me. That's what I want to do."

In April, Buatsi snatched a gold medal at the European championships, beating the first, second and third seeds en route. His Olympic gold medal hope, however, was eventually extinguished by the crafty Kazakhstani southpaw Adilbek Niyazymbetov in the semifinal, meaning he settled for bronze. Chances are we'll be seeing a lot more of him in the future.

The same can be said of 6-foot-6, 240-pound relentless juggernaut Joe Joyce, of course. He, like Buatsi, came away from Rio with his reputation enhanced and he, too, boasts a fascinating backstory.

Had the 30-year-old not been a world-class amateur boxer, Olympic medalist and potential pro star, Joyce may well have made his mark on a very different type of canvas.

His role models in boxing are Muhammad Ali and Lennox Lewis but away from the ring it is Pablo Picasso, Vincent van Gogh and the fascinating Jean-Michel Basquiat, a graffiti artist-turned-neo-expressionist painter who died at the age of 27 from a heroin overdose.

Joyce is as comfortable talking brush strokes and artistic mediums as he is throwing a concussive left hook or showing how to slip the jab.

"My style of painting is simply get the paint brush, find the background and then I'm straight on the canvas with my brush, drawing out what I want," said Joyce, who holds a degree in fine art. "I quite like to get out and do it within one sitting.

"I find painting quite meditative and relaxing. You just focus on what you're doing. I'm happy boxing now; it's exciting, it's entertaining, it's something I'm good at and enjoy. When I was doing my art degree, I was busy cycling, I was doing athletics, I was very active. But at the same time I was doing paintings as well. It's just about finding the balance."

Joyce told me his dream was to paint a self-portrait after the Olympic Games with the gold medal dangling from his neck. That was scuppered by a controversial defeat to France's Tony Yoka in the final, though, and that gold medal will have to either wait for four years until Tokyo or be adapted to a silver medal or perhaps even a professional title.

With promoters starting to circle, we shall soon find out. But most likely, it is time for Joyce to go into the paid ranks.

The heavyweight scene is vibrant here and Joyce is an experienced amateur who has steadily augmented his reputation by winning the Commonwealth Games title in 2014 and European title in 2015.

He has been sparring with IBF heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua for more than six years, and with world champion Tyson Fury constantly generating news in the division and David Haye lurking for his opportunity, Joyce would be in the mix within two to three years.

Yet in the creative mind of Joyce, there are potentially two strands going forward – his paintings in the Louvre in Paris and the artistry of his work with his fists on the canvas in Las Vegas.

CARL FRAMPTON VS. LEO SANTA CRUZ

A special mention should go to Carl Frampton for the tremendous job he did on Leo Santa Cruz at the end of July in Brooklyn, New York.

It's one thing winning a vacant world title at home or bringing the champion to you; it's another thing entirely dethroning a champion of Santa Cruz's caliber in his home country.

Frampton's feat ranks with some of the great performances by British boxers on foreign shores, including Lloyd Honeyghan's upset of Donald Curry in Atlantic City in 1986. Curry quit at the end of the sixth round. Ken Buchanan's split-decision victory over Ismael Laguna in Puerto Rico on Sept 26, 1970, was another to rank alongside that. Buchanan became the first British boxer to win a world title abroad for more than 50 years.

John H. Stracey did the same against Jose Napoles in Mexico City in 1975. Floored in the first, welterweight Stracey outfought one of the all-time great Cubans en route to a sixth-round stoppage. And Kell Brook's defeat of the unbeaten Shawn Porter, making the second defense of his IBF welterweight belt in August 2014, sits in the same category.

Most recently, heavyweight Fury pulled off a similar feat last November in Germany against Wladimir Klitschko and now Frampton has followed suit. Consequently, at a time when Britain boasts more world champions than ever before – now 13 in total – those two perhaps stand tallest.

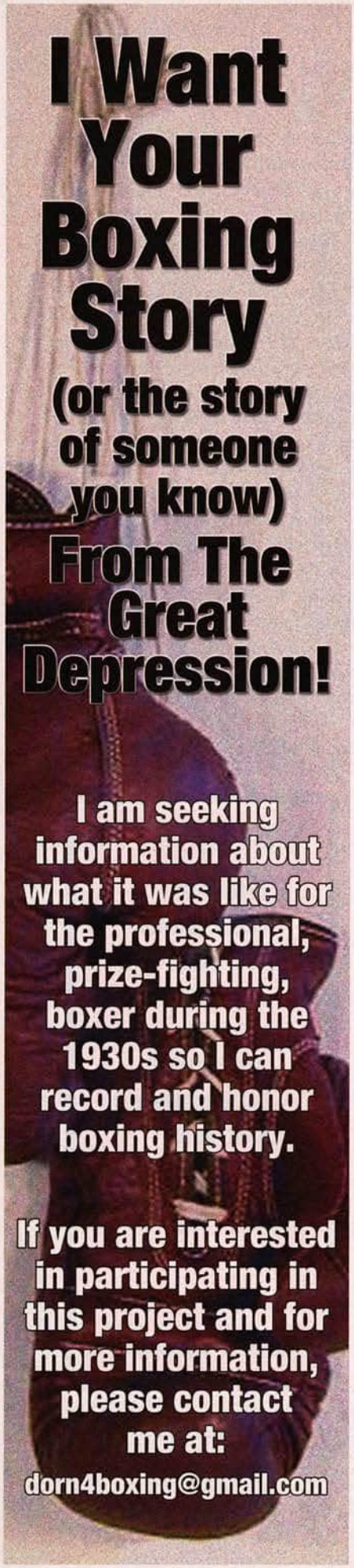
TOP 10

1. TYSON FURY
2. CARL FRAMPTON
3. KELL BROOK
4. AMIR KHAN
5. LEE SELBY
6. JAMES DEGALE
7. JAMIE MCDONNELL
8. SCOTT QUIGG
9. BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
10. CALLUM SMITH

11-15: Liam Smith, Tony Bellew, Terry Flanagan, Anthony Crolla, Ricky Burns

Through fights of Sept. 4, 2016.

Gareth A Davies is boxing correspondent for The Telegraph, London.



EXCERPTS FROM THE **RINGTV.COM** EDITOR'S POPULAR COLUMN

Since 2001, RingTV.com Editor Doug Fischer has held an ongoing dialog – which occasionally becomes heated debate – with boxing fans from around the world in "Dougie's Mailbag." The following excerpts are from the Aug. 19, 22 and 29 editions of the Monday and Friday mailbags.

SCOTT, from Orlando, Florida, believes that it's time for Robert Guerrero to retire from boxing after watching the two-division titleholder drop a split decision to unheralded welterweight David Peralta. "It's clear to see that his better fighting days are behind him," said Scott. "He is young and seems like a smart enough guy so maybe he could sit behind the mic, train some fighters, mentor kids or do whatever the hell he wants to do. It's a great big world out there."

DOUGIE'S reply: Yes, it's a great big world out there but Guerrero is a small-town guy who has been boxing his entire life. It's not just a job for him, it's his life and an integral part of his identity. He's been good to boxing and boxing has been good to him. He's done well financially and has probably saved enough money to retire. Guerrero doesn't live lavishly or extravagantly. However, I won't fault him if he wants to continue boxing. Is he world class? No, not anymore, and certainly not at 147 pounds. But he can still fight. I consider him a gatekeeper now but he's serviceable and he's still got enough name-recognition to command good paydays.

Now I'm not saying he should fight until he's 40 or that he should be tossed to the wolves. I don't want to see Guerrero in there with Errol Spence Jr. or Shawn Porter. I don't want to see rematches with Danny Garcia or Keith Thurman.

I'd be OK with Guerrero fighting a rematch with Andre Berto. If he and Shane Mosley wanted to go at it for the hell of it, I wouldn't be mad at them.

But I'd really be interested in seeing the 33-year-old veteran serve as the first real challenge for an unbeaten but untested young welterweight up-and-comer – such as Ivan Golub, Alejandro Luna or Alex Saucedo – or a fellow grizzled gatekeeper.

DAVID, from Nashville, was impressed with 2016 U.S. Olympians Shakur Stevenson, who won a silver medal in the bantamweight division, and Claressa Shields, who won her second gold medal in the women's middleweight division. However, David isn't sure whether Stevenson is ready for the professional ranks: "I didn't see a lot of pop in his punches." He thinks Shields didn't get enough credit or support following her 2012 Olympic victory and hopes "bigger and better things" are in her future.

DOUGIE'S reply: Shields was expected to dominate her way to a second Olympic gold medal and she did just that. I think she will be more appreciated and reap more endorsement deals following the Rio Games than she did as a teenager following the London Games. She's not sure what she wants to do next but her legacy in the sport is secured. Her accomplishments make her a pioneer in women's amateur boxing. If Shields wants to give the professional ranks a shot, I think she has the potential to be TV staple (and to make decent money with her fights). It's all about timing. She's better known to the general public now than she was four years ago and it appears as though major U.S. promoters and networks are open to giving women's boxing a chance. Heather Hardy, whose last six bouts have been on the undercards to major fights at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, outpointed Shelly Vincent

on NBC Sports recently. Seniesa Estrada, who fought on two Gennady Golovkin undercards and under the Roman Gonzalez-Carlos Cuadras fight at The Forum in Inglewood, California, fought on EstrellaTV in June (a six-round decision over Christina Fuentes). The Hardy-Vincent and Estrada-Fuentes bouts were entertaining and both Hardy and Estrada sell tickets, so my guess is that we will see more female bouts on TV in the near future (and I'm all for it). I could be wrong but my guess is that Shields would be welcome in the world of prizefighting.

I think Stevenson is ready for the pros. He has kicked butt in pro gyms on the East Coast for years. He's tall (5 feet 8 inches) and rangy for a junior featherweight/featherweight and he knows how to use his height and reach to his advantage. He's a very smart southpaw ring general/technician. His Olympic Games experience/performances and the two semi-pro World Series of Boxing bouts that he won earlier in the year suggest that the 19-year-old is ready to make that professional transition if he wants it. He shouldn't be moved too fast during his first two years in the pro ranks but I think he can handle himself under the right promotional/managerial situation.

His power and physical strength will develop with maturity and pro-style training and conditioning.

JUAN VALVERDE, from San Diego, was blown away by Errol Spence Jr.'s brutal KO of Leonard Bundu. "I see him as a force in the (welterweight) division who can pretty much beat anybody right now," said Valverde. "I would favor him over the likes of (Keith) Thurman, (Shawn) Porter, (Manny) Pacquiao and (Danny) Garcia. I know it's early but I did the eye test and he passes with flying colors. What do you think?"

DOUGIE'S reply: Spence definitely passes the eye test, so much so that he's considered to be a Top 5 147-pound contender by most fans and boxing media without having defeated a legit Top 10-rated welterweight. (He's currently rated No. 7 by THE RING.)

I'm probably in the minority with this opinion but had Kell Brook not challenged Gennady Golovkin and Spence got a shot at the undefeated IBF welterweight titleholder before the end of this year, I would have heavily favored the Englishman.

I'm not saying that Spence doesn't deserve a title shot or that he wouldn't be live and competitive but he has never faced a fighter as athletically gifted, skilled, versatile and hard-punching as Brook.

I think Porter would provide Spence with a real test. A victory over the experienced former beltholder would verify everybody's "eye test." I'm not sure if Porter has the punching power to seriously hurt Spence but he has the physical strength, ruggedness and awkward aggression to make it a fight.

TONY PENA, from Beacon, New York, wanted Fischer's picks and analysis on the following mythical matchups: Miguel Cotto vs. Julio Cesar Chavez at 140 pounds; Pernell Whitaker vs. Hector Camacho at 135; Wilfred Benitez vs. Mike McCallum at 154; and Bob Foster vs. Tommy Hearns at 175.

DOUGIE'S reply: Miguel Cotto vs. Julio Cesar Chavez at 140 – Chavez by late TKO in a brutal, classic war of attrition.

Pernell Whitaker vs. Hector Camacho at 135 – Sweet Pea by very close, maybe split decision in a fast-paced tactical showdown between ultra-savvy/talented southpaws.

Wilfred Benitez vs. Mike McCallum at 154 – Benitez sticks, moves and counterpunches his way to a close but unanimous decision in a competitive chess match.

Bob Foster vs. Tommy Hearns at 175 – Foster gets through a shaky first round, stuns Hearns in the second and ices the Hitman in the third round of a classic shootout between explosive thin men.

 By Mitch Abramson

Trey Lippe-Morrison (right) appears to have his famous father's punching power.

TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW

TREY LIPPE-MORRISON, THE SON OF **TOMMY MORRISON,** IS TRYING TO CARVE OUT HIS OWN NICHE IN BOXING

It's not easy following a star. It's even tougher being the child of one.

Trey Lippe-Morrison is the son of late heavyweight titleholder Tommy "The Duke" Morrison, who has one of the more remarkable legacies in recent memory. The younger Morrison understands that some may view him harshly – as the child of privilege and someone who's being fast-tracked because of his famous daddy – but he doesn't really care.

He's the first to admit he's still learning on the job after taking up boxing only two years ago.

"When I was younger, because of what my dad did, I always pictured boxing but it never happened because football was my sport," said Lippe-Morrison, who played defensive end for Central Arkansas.

Lippe-Morrison was raised mostly by

his mother while his father was a transient presence in his life but the "Morrison" in his name is central to how he's perceived.

"A lot of the fans that liked my dad, they really like me," he said. "But a lot of the real boxing fans, they probably think I'm a joke, trying to follow in my dad's footsteps. They think I'll never be nothing like my dad. It's actually a goal of mine to change their minds. I'm not just trying to gain something from my father's name. I'm trying to make a name for myself and I'm taking this for real."

As a demonstration of his commitment, the 26-year-old moved into a Hollywood apartment a year ago so he could be close to his trainer, Freddie Roach, and the Wild Card Boxing Club. He returns home to Vinita, Oklahoma, for a few weeks after every fight and then heads back to California.

"I will do this sport for as long as my body can do it," he said. "As long as it's safe and everything is working OK, I'm going to be in this sport."

Shortly after his father died at 44 on Sept. 1, 2013, Lippe-Morrison went to speak to his father's former promoter, Tony Holden. He asked whether he would promote his boxing career. Holden initially refused but later agreed to take him on.

Lippe-Morrison turned pro on Feb. 15, 2014, winning by second-round knockout of Kris Renty at Buffalo Run Casino in Miami, Oklahoma, where he has fought most of his bouts. (His next fight was set for Sept. 23 on ShoBox, his first national broadcast.)

Piecing together his relationship with his father is complicated. He says his mother, Cristi, started dating Morrison before he starred in "Rocky V" in 1990 – playing fictional character Tommy Gunn – but they were never married.

Morrison attended some of his son's high school and college games but he was largely absent as he matured. The boxer/movie star was diagnosed with HIV in 1996.

"Growing up with him was good," said Lippe-Morrison, who was a toddler when Morrison won the WBO heavyweight title against George Foreman in 1993. "I was with him back and forth while he was in boxing up until I was about 10 years old. Then after that, when he went to prison (on weapons charges), I didn't get to see him for a couple years. ...

"As far as when I got older, I didn't get to see him much, but we still loved each other. I don't hold that against him."

His mother eventually married Mark Lippe, who helped raise him. Since he started boxing, he has reconnected with his father in his own way, watching "every one of my father's fights like a hundred times. I really study up on him."

And his style is the spitting image of his namesake. "It's almost eerie how similar we look," he says. "I think 90 percent of our movements are alike."

TREY LIPPE-MORRISON

Age: 26

Weight class: heavyweight

Height: 6 feet 2 inches

Stance: orthodox

Hometown: Vinita, Oklahoma

Record: 11-0 (11 KOs)

Biggest strengths: Morrison is an aggressive, physical fighter with decent head movement. He cuts off the ring well and keeps his hands high and seems to be always in position to throw punches. He goes to the body well and has a quick, accurate, powerful right hand.

Biggest question marks: Morrison has no amateur background and took the sport up two years ago, so he's a raw. He has a tendency to hesitate when throwing his punches rather than firing them off. He also tends to square up in front of his opponent while trying to plan his next move.

3 MORE TO WATCH

RUBEN VILLA
FEATHERWEIGHT

Villa (1-0, 1 KO) was a highly touted amateur with a pair of wins over U.S. Olympic silver medalist Shakur Stevenson. The 19-year-old southpaw, who recently signed with Banner and Thompson Promotions, made quick work of Gerardo Molina in his pro debut in July, dropping him twice and stopping him in the first round. Villa beat Stevenson twice in 2015.

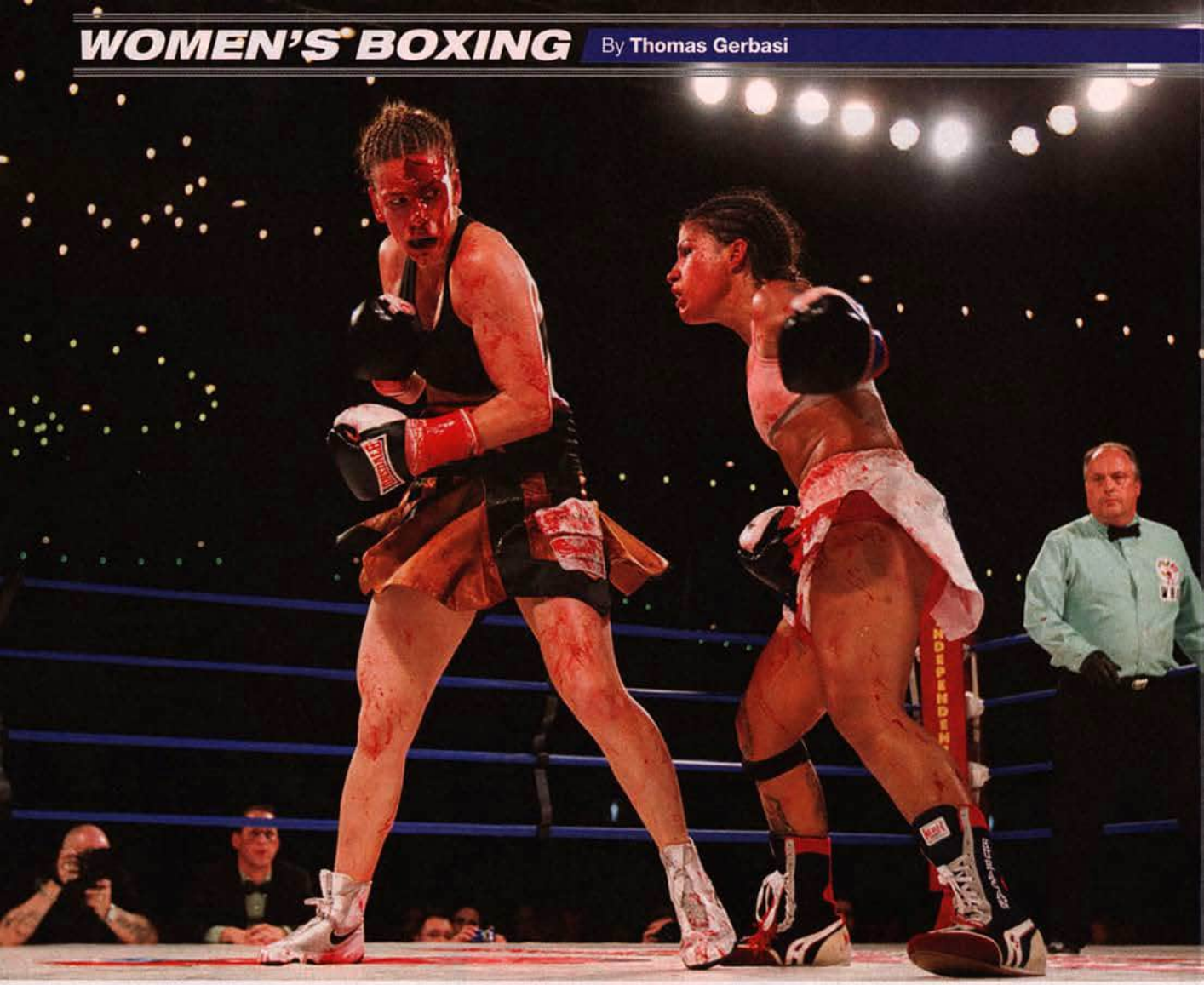
DANIEL FRANCO
FEATHERWEIGHT

Franco (14-0-3, 9 KOs) is signed to Roc Nation Sports and has fought three times on Andre Ward undercards at Oracle Arena in Oakland, California. The big-fight atmosphere has helped him to think big; he recently called out former titleholder Leo Santa Cruz after Santa Cruz lost to Carl Frampton in July. Franco, 24, is a good counterpuncher with fast reflexes and an aggressive style.

GAMAL YAFAI
JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

Yafai (10-0, 4 KOs) is a former amateur standout with sound fundamentals who is progressing rapidly in the paid ranks. The Matchroom-promoted fighter successfully defended his Commonwealth title with a 12-round unanimous decision against the more experienced professional Josh Wale (20-8-2) on July 30.

 By Thomas Gerbasi



ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

MELISSA HERNANDEZ CAN STILL FIGHT BUT IS FED UP WITH THE BUSINESS OF BOXING

This is a retirement story. Or is it? Melissa Hernandez may not even know at this point, and as she laughs it's evident why she has been one of the most compelling boxers – male or female – of her era.

A former national amateur champion who turned pro in 2005 and went on to win titles at 122, 126, 130 and 135 pounds, Hernandez traveled the globe, dazzled fans and opponents and consistently fought an elite level of competition. But after a July 16 loss to Layla McCarter, in their fourth fight, Hernandez took to Facebook to call it quits at the age of 36:

"Dear boxing fans. Tonight was my last fight in boxing. I've had a hell of a run. Thank you to all my fans, friends and, family. But also I'm sooooo happy it's f---ing over. Thank you boxing, but f--- you boxing for never paying me my worth. All you chicks out there still boxing, keep punching. It's a hell of a ride."

As of August, she was still retired.

"It's basically the money," Hernandez told THE RING. "It's all risk, no reward. At some point, you know that you're climbing that ladder. And there's nowhere else for me to go up. Everybody says, 'One more title,' one more this or

Melissa Hernandez (right) came up on the short end of this bloody fight against Jelena Mrdjenovich.

that. How much do you want me to do?"

Most retirements are greeted with a sigh of relief, mainly because they take place long after a fighter's sell-by date. In the case of Hernandez, she was a couple years removed from THE RING's 2013 Fight of the Year against Jelena Mrdjenovich and had won four of her last six bouts, with both losses coming via decision to McCarter. In other words, she still has gas in the tank. But there have been few opportunities for her as of late.

"I've been talking to a couple of promoters," she said, "and they're like, 'Women's boxing is on the up and up.' I said, 'No, it's not.' It's just ridiculous to hear people that don't know the business talk about the business. So I'm stepping away. My body is saying to step away because who can fight for two thousand more dollars anymore?"

If a list is made of the Top 20 female fighters, Hernandez will likely have a place on that list. The four divisional titles are enough, but when you consider that she has fought the likes of McCarter, Mrdjenovich, Marcela Acuna, Erica Farias, Chevelle Hallback and Kelsey Jeffries, that "likely" turns into a "definitely." Moreover, if you saw her fight, you would never forget it.

"My whole understanding of the sport was not just to be champion," she said. "It was to be remembered, to do the things that nobody else did. And my career was based on 'Win, lose or draw, you're gonna remember who I was in the ring.' I look at tapes sometimes and I'm like, 'Wow, that was me.' Even my last fight."

But will it be Hernandez's last? On Aug. 11, she was still retired. On Aug. 11, she was also waffling a bit, especially when asked what's next for her after boxing.

"I'm stuck," she said with a laugh.

So no golf in sunny south Florida, where she makes her home today?

"I'm gonna pick up extreme chess," she deadpanned. "I think that's amazing and I'd be so down to do it."

That would be a sight to see. In the meantime, when pressed about the next step, she started to crack.

"My next step is hoping I can bait in (undisputed welterweight champion) Cecilia Braekhus," she said. "Their camp says that I'm too small. Well that's even more reason for you to take it. Be the first person to knock me out. But I'm all risk, no reward. It's fighting. I understand the business. Cecilia might f--- around and lose."

What about a fourth fight with Mrdjenovich? Could she make featherweight again?

"If you gave me eight weeks, I'd try my best," she said. "But it doesn't have to be for her belt. Let's meet at '32."

Or Hernandez and McCarter could always take their show on the road and fight four more times.

"My rivalry with Layla McCarter isn't a personal one," Hernandez said. "I genuinely don't care for her in the ring but I am appreciative of her because she sticks to her plan. I wish there were more women out there that were ballsy enough to do it. Layla does it for the 'W.' I do it for two reasons: for the 'W' and the thrill factor. I love to fight."

And just like that, "Huracan" sounds as if she's ready to fight once again. She doesn't deny it either.

"I'll tell you the truth: I'm not ready to leave. I feel pushed out. Women's boxing doesn't want quality anymore. But I love, love, love boxing. Boxing and me have had the normal marriage, where you love and you hate each other."

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

CLARESSA SHIELDS
OLYMPIC GOLD MEDAL WINNER

The first American boxer – male or female – to successfully defend an Olympic title, the Flint, Michigan, fighter did her nation proud once again in the 2016 Games. She was barely challenged in dominating the 75-kilogram class in Rio and picking up her second gold. Now comes the interesting part. Shields, just 21, is a game-changer in every sense of the phrase but can she propel women's boxing to a new level in terms of public perception?

POUND FOR POUND

1. **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**
   Norway • 28-0 (7 KOs)
   Welterweight
2. **DELFINE PERSOON**
   Belgium • 36-1 (16 KOs)
   Lightweight
3. **YESICA YOLANDA BOPP**
   Argentina • 29-1 (12 KOs)
   Junior flyweight
4. **JELENA MRDJENOVICH**
   Canada • 36-10-1 (19 KOs)
   Featherweight
5. **JESSICA CHAVEZ**
   Mexico • 27-4-3 (4 KOs)
   Flyweight
6. **LAYLA MCCARTER**
   U.S. • 38-13-5 (9 KOs)
   Lightweight
7. **ERICA ANABELLA FARIAS**
   Argentina • 23-1 (10 KOs)
   Junior welterweight
8. **IBETH ZAMORA SILVA**
   Mexico • 26-5 (11 KOs)
   Junior flyweight
9. **ZULINA MUNOZ**
   Mexico • 47-1-2 (28 KOs)
   Junior bantamweight
10. **AMANDA SERRANO**
    U.S. • 29-1-1 (22 KOs)
    Featherweight

Through fights of Sept. 4, 2016

Carl Frampton (left) delivered in the biggest fight of his life.

RINGSIDE REPORTS

BY NORM FRAUENHEIM

CARL FRAMPTON MD 12 LEO SANTA CRUZ

Date: July 30
Site: Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Division: Featherweight
Weights: Frampton 125¼ pounds, Santa Cruz 125½
RING ratings (before fight): Santa Cruz No. 2, Frampton No. 2 at junior featherweight
Network: Showtime

Carl Frampton hoped for something memorable. A fight tough enough to remember, he said.

Frampton got everything he wanted, leaving Leo Santa Cruz with a blemished record in a majority decision that was a unanimous classic and probably a piece of history that has just begun to unfold.

It'll be remembered, all right, perhaps as the 2016 Fight of the Year. But even that year-end trophy would somehow fall short without the sequel that was in winds stirred up by the uninterrupted storm of punches Frampton and Santa Cruz threw and endured throughout 12 rounds.

"What possibly is better?" promoter Lou DiBella said of inevitable talk about a rematch. "These guys are meant to fight each other. … It was a privilege just to watch – back and forth, landing bombs. Neither guy went down. Amazing."

Yeah, oh, yeah – so much so that it would be amazing only if there wasn't a part two, especially in a business that needs more rivalries than retreads.

In the immediate aftermath of the dramatic Premier Boxing Champions bout, there was some doubt about whether the contract included a rematch clause. After his first loss, Santa Cruz (32-1-1, 18 knockouts) was quick to say there was and even quicker to say he wanted to invoke it immediately in Los Angeles or back in New York or even Belfast, Frampton's hometown.

"I just want the rematch," said Santa Cruz, whose cancer-stricken father and trainer, Jose Santa Cruz, missed the first half of training camp while undergoing chemotherapy. "Wherever he wants it. I want it in L.A. but if he wants it in Belfast, I could go to Belfast as well. I'm 100 percent ready."

In his first bout at featherweight, Frampton (23-0, 14 KOs) landed 200 power punches, nearly knocking down Santa Cruz in the second round. All the while, the inexhaustible Santa Cruz threw 1,002 punches without throwing out a shoulder.

Frampton's corner wasn't as quick to address the possibility about the immediate when-and-where of a first defense of his WBA belt, in part because of opportunities in the U.K., which is collecting titles as fast as it once collected colonies. U.K. fans are clamoring for a Frampton showdown with Welshman Lee Selby, the IBF's 126-pound titleholder.

After RingTV.com confirmed there was in fact a rematch clause, Frampton, who won the fight based on two cards (116-112 and 117-111), began to talk about what he and everyone else knows: A rich abundance of punches, energy and drama in the first one dictates a sequel. There's also an element of uncertainty: It was a draw, 114-114, on the third card.

Frampton has told Belfast media he would like to do it all over again before Christmas. He has no illusions about Santa Cruz, whom he calls a great fighter and true warrior.

"I'm just a normal guy, working class, who can fight a wee bit," Frampton said in a wee bit of an understatement, the only one after a performance that has generated only superlatives and a demand for more. »

WORLDWIDE RESULTS— Go to: bit.do/worldwide-results or scan the QR code to see weekly fight results at RingTV.com.

NO. 9 MARLON TAPALES KO 11 NO. 8 PUNGLUANG SOR SINGYU

July 27, Ayutthaya, Thailand

Download the video. Send it to the Boxing Writers Association of America and demand it get some kind of recognition in the year-end balloting. In any time zone, Marlon Tapales' upset of Pungluang Sor Singyu was a Fight of the Year.

Tapales, the latest Filipino sensation in an island nation dominated by Senator Manny Pacquiao's celebrity, struggled to get to Thailand, struggled to make weight, struggled to get up once, struggled to get up again, yet was the only one still standing after an epic 11-round struggle with Sor Singyu for the WBO bantamweight title.

Tapales (29-2, 12 KOs), down twice in the fifth round, quickly recovered in the sixth, scoring a knockdown with a right. He followed with body shots that weakened the favored Thai (52-4, 35 KOs), who looked beaten late in the 10th and was finished by a left early in the 11th.

NO. 2 ADONIS STEVENSON KO 4 THOMAS WILLIAMS JR.

July 29, Quebec City, Canada (Spike TV)

Adonis Stevenson delivered a stunning reminder that he can be more than a bit player in the light heavyweight discussion, no matter what happens in a definitive Sergey Kovalev-Andre Ward showdown.

Stevenson's power is still scary.

Kovalev, angry at futile negotiations for a fight with Stevenson, stopped mentioning the Canadian a year ago. But the Russian might have been the only one not talking about a Stevenson left that dropped Thomas Williams Jr., face-first and finished, for a frightening moment at the end of the fourth round.

"Fire fighting fire," Stevenson (28-1, 23 KOs) said after the seventh defense of his WBC title.

Now 39, Stevenson appeared vulnerable when Williams (20-2, 14 KOs) applied pressure and landed a succession of surprising blows. Yet Stevenson still had the final say, dictating when and how it would end with the kind of power that defines him.

MIKEY GARCIA TKO 5 ELIO ROJAS

July 30, Brooklyn, N.Y. (Showtime)

Mikey Garcia, an accomplished tactician within the ropes and a man of many interests outside of them, didn't fight for 30 months. It was a long layoff, but not wasted.

Garcia stayed busy, keeping rust off the tactical skillset in the gym while pursuing another interest in auto racing. Garcia took racing lessons and got customized work on a car at a Richard Petty-owned shop.

The comeback? It was a test drive.

Garcia (35-0, 29 KOs) ran over Elio Rojas (24-3, 14 KOs), scoring four knockdowns for a fifth-round TKO with the proficiency he had before a contractual dispute put him on the shelf in 2014.

"People haven't forgotten me," Garcia said after reminding everyone of a featherweight champ with pound-for-pound ability.

What's next? Garcia, still a promotional free agent in August, came back at 138 pounds. He hopes for a shot at a lightweight title.

TONY HARRISON TKO 9 SERGEY RABCHENKO

July 30, Brooklyn, NY (Showtime)

There were yawns. Then boos. It was a junior middleweight fight begging for an end, one that Tony Harrison delivered too late but timely enough to save the audience from more rounds of boredom.

"I was luring him to sleep," said Harrison (24-1, 20 KOs), who through eight rounds put everybody else to sleep before landing a sharp right that finished Sergey Rabchenko (27-2, 20 KOs) at 1:18 of the ninth.

It was forgettable in every way other than what it did for Harrison's career, which had slipped into limbo after Willie Nelson stopped him last year. The victory is a chance for Harrison to renew potential that late Hall of Fame trainer Emanuel Steward saw in him.

"My biggest victory ever," Harrison said after winning an IBF eliminator that put him first in line for a shot at a title held by Jermall Charlo.

NO. 5 ANDRE WARD UD 12 ALEXANDER BRAND

Aug. 6, Oakland, Calif. (HBO)

The tune-ups were supposed to be pieces in a puzzle that will be completed when Andre Ward and Sergey Kovalev meet on Nov. 19 in what ranks as the biggest fight of the year.

What that puzzle will look like after Kovalev and Ward fight for the light heavyweight title, however, is still anybody's guess.

Against Alexander Brand, Ward, a 100-1 favorite, did exactly what Kovalev did against Isaac Chilemba in July. Both won, scoring one-sided decisions, each unanimously devoid of hints at what and how they'll do against each other.

Maybe that was the plan. If so, each pulled it off to perfection, revealing little and boring many.

"I tried to press it but it's good to get the rounds," said Ward (30-0, 15 KOs), who went the full 12 for a shutout – 120-108 on all three cards – of the awkward Brand (25-2, 19 KOs).

NO. 7 ERROL SPENCE JR. KO 6 LEONARD BUNDU

Aug. 21, Coney Island, N.Y. (NBC)

There's a pied-piper quality to Errol Spence Jr.'s steady climb from prospect to contender. First, Spence drew attention. Now he's drawing a crowd.

It has never been bigger. A sure step in the welterweight's emergence from intriguing to bankable was in the ratings for NBC's telecast of his stoppage of Leonard Bundu.

A sixth-round knockout of the 41-year-old Bundu was predictable. Spence's power punches landed as advertised.

The surprise was in how many saw it and the advertising attached to it. Ratings peaked at 6.3 million, which means a lot of people saw the combo by Spence that finished Bundu (32-2-2, 12 KOs) at 2:06 of the round.

"Fighting on prime time, I wanted to put on a great performance," said Spence (21-0, 18 KOs), who did exactly that in becoming the IBF contender for the welterweight title held by Kell Brook.

NO. 1 RYOICHI TAGUCHI UD 12 RYO MIYAZAKI

Aug. 31, Tokyo (TV Tokyo)

The tale of the tape was a blueprint for Ryoichi Taguchi, who adhered to it for a victory he envisioned before the opening bell and engineered throughout 12 rounds.

"I was able to control the pace better than I thought," Taguchi told The Japan Times in a matter-of-fact tone after a matter-of-fact decision over Ryo Miyazaki to retain his WBA junior flyweight title, his fourth successful defense.

Taguchi (25-2-1, 11 KOs) employed a four-inch advantage in height, frustrating Miyazaki for a 119-109, 117-111, 116-112 decision.

Miyazaki (24-2-3, 15 KOs) battled to get inside after five rounds but Taguchi's agile footwork turned his pursuit into a futile chase. Miyazaki stepped inside in the sixth but was met with a right that nearly knocked him down.

"I've never felt so much pressure," said Taguchi, who now controls the 108-pound division with Donnie Nietes' move to 112.

NO. 6 LUIS CONCEPCION UD 12 NO. 5 KOHEI KONO

Aug. 31, Tokyo (TV Tokyo)

Blood from cuts streamed into the eyes of both fighters. It was brutal. But Luis Concepcion saw only the beauty.

Concepcion, an old man in a weight class dominated by younger fighters, finally won a world title, upsetting Kohei Kono. At 30, Concepcion is a lord of the super flies.

"Hello, my people," Concepcion (35-4, 24 KOs), a Panamanian, said after taking the WBA's 115-pound title from Kono (32-9-1, 13 KOs). "I fulfilled my promise."

Concepcion, who before the opening bell was 0-3 in title fights, controlled the early rounds. He opened a cut above Kono's left eye in the seventh, suffered a nasty cut over his left eye in the 11th and survived for a 116-112, 115-113, 116-112 decision.

"Look how we ended up," Concepcion said as both posed while wiping away the blood.

Gore and all, Concepcion liked what he saw.

JERWIN ANCAJAS UD 12 NO. 4 MCJOE ARROYO

Sept. 3, Manila, Philippines

The paycheck was small. The victory wasn't.

Filipino Jerwin Ancajas fought for boxing's version of a minimum wage and collected a belt, the IBF's 115-pound title, in an upset that might be an investment in better days. Bigger pay.

Ancajas (25-1-1, 16 KOs) took the title from McJoe Arroyo in a stunner, scoring a seventh-round knockdown en route to a 118-109, 117-110, 115-112 decision in a problematic bout that had been postponed and moved from Puerto Rico to Manila by Manny Pacquiao's promotional company.

For his world-class work, Ancajas got a third-world purse, $3,750, or 15 percent – the challenger's cut – of the $25,000 purse bid. Arroyo (17-1, 8 KOs) took home the rest, but returned to Puerto Rico without a belt that Ancajas hopes leads to Roman Gonzalez.

"I hope in my next fight I'll be able to make more," Ancajas said after his 12th straight victory.

NO. 1 NAOYA INOUE KO 10 KAROON JARUPIANLERD

Sept. 4, Zama, Japan (Fuji TV)

Naoye Inoue has been seeking perfection ever since he was called a prodigy. He's perfect, at least in the numbers within the brackets next to his name. He's 11-0 with nine knockouts.

Unbeaten is about as perfect as perfection can be, although some might quibble that it falls two KOs short. Turns out, Inoue is the chief quibbler.

He continued to be his biggest critic after a 10th-round KO of Karoon Jarupianlerd (38-8-1, 18 KOs). Inoue appeared to be in control throughout but he was unhappy at some inconsistency during the middle rounds

"Sorry for that," he said. "Determination got me the knockout but the process leading up to it was no good whatsoever. I can't be talking about having big fights."

The biggest would be Roman Gonzalez, whom Inoue planned to watch from ringside on Sept. 10 in Los Angeles against Carlos Cuadras.

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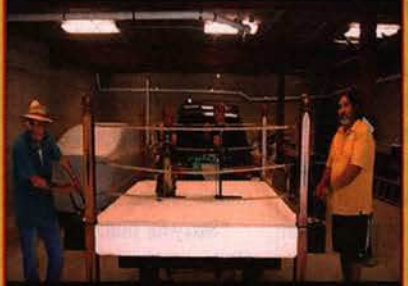

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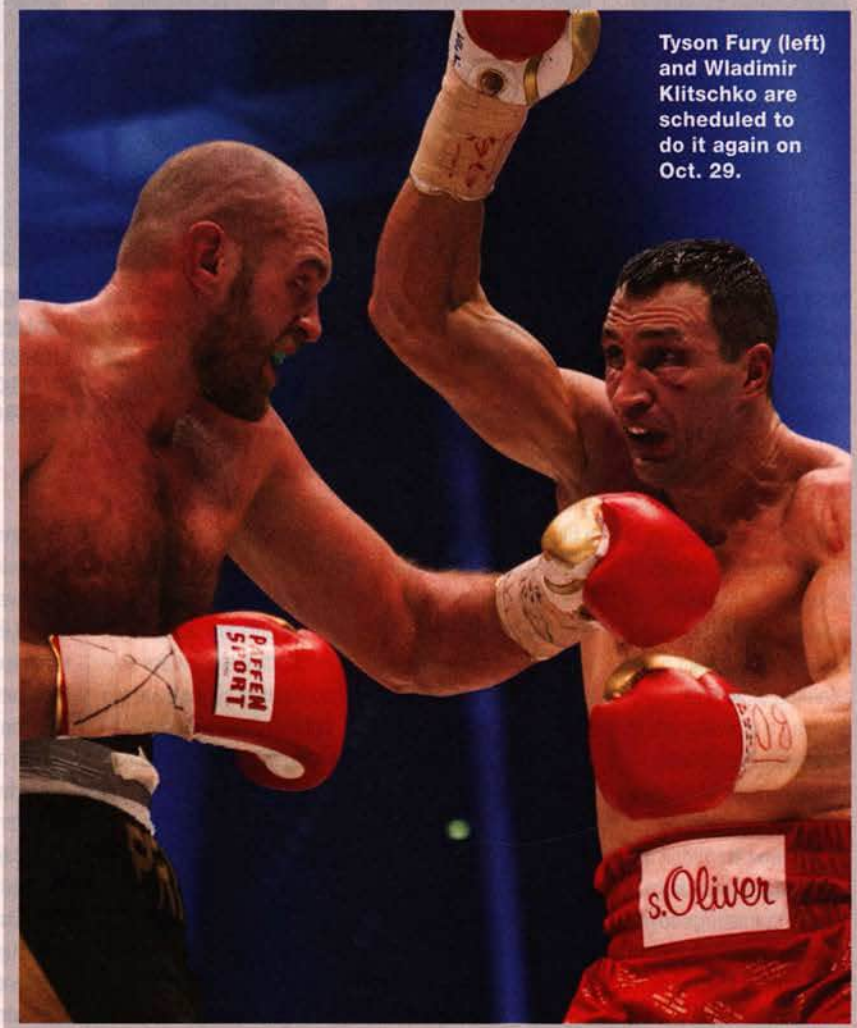

Tyson Fury (left) and Wladimir Klitschko are scheduled to do it again on Oct. 29.

OCTOBER

TYSON FURY VS. WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO

Date: Oct. 29
Location: Manchester, England
Division: Heavyweights (for Fury's RING, WBA and WBO titles)
RING Ratings: Fury C, Klitschko No. 1
TV: HBO
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★
Also fighting: Hughie Fury vs. Andy Ruiz (No. 10), heavyweights
Significance: Fury (25-0, 18 KOs) stunned the boxing world and Wladimir Klitschko by dethroning the longtime champion in November of last year in Germany. The Englishman used his jab to neutralize the Ukrainian and win a unanimous decision. Can he do it again? Well, we guess that Klitschko (64-4, 53 KOs) will be better prepared this time but he also is 40. He might simply be slipping.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Fury SD; Fischer – Fury SD; Harty – Draw; Abramson – Klitschko SD

OCT. 1 – Juergen Braehmer (No. 6) vs. Nathan Cleverly, light heavyweights, Neubrandenburg, Germany.
OCT. 1 – Joseph Parker (No. 7) vs. Alexander Dimitrenko, heavyweights, Manukau City, New Zealand.
OCT. 1 – Cecilia Braekhus (No. 1 P4P) vs. Anne Sophie Mathis, welterweights, Oslo, Norway.
OCT. 3 – Jonathan Barros vs. Satoshi Hosono (No. 10), featherweights, Tokyo.
OCT. 7 – Ricky Burns (No. 8) vs. Kiryl Relikh, junior welterwieghts (for Burns' WBA title), Glasgow, Scotland.
OCT. 7 – L.A. Fight Club, Los Angeles (RingTVLive.com and Estrella TV).
OCT. 8 – Liam Walsh vs. Andrey Klimov, junior lightweights, Harrow, England.

OCT. 8 – Juan Manuel Lopez vs. Wilfredo Vazquez Jr., junior lightweights, San Juan, Puerto Rico.
OCT. 8 – Jelena Mrdjenovich (No. 4 P4P) vs. Gaelle Amand, featherweights (for Mrdjenovich's WBA and WBC titles), France.
OCT. 15 – Tony Bellew (No. 5) vs. BJ Flores, cruiserweights (for Bellew's WBC title), Liverpool, England. Also, Luke Campbell vs. Derry Matthews, lightweights.
OCT. 22 – David Lemieux (No. 4) vs. Cristian Fabian Rios, middleweights, Montreal
OCT. 22 – Chris Eubank Jr. (No. 6) vs. Tommy Langford, middleweights, Cardiff, Wales

NOVEMBER

JESSIE VARGAS VS. MANNY PACQUIAO

Date: Nov. 5
Location: Las Vegas
Division: Welterweights (for Vargas' WBO title)
RING Ratings: Vargas No. 8
TV: Pay-per-view
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★★
Also fighting: Nonito Donaire vs. Jessie Magdaleno, junior featherweights (for Donaire's WBO title)
Significance: Pacquiao (58-6-2, 38 KOs) is 37 and near the end of his career but remains formidable, as his clear points victory over Tim Bradley in April demonstrated. Vargas (27-1, 10 KOs) bounced back from a unanimous-decision loss to Bradley to upset then-unbeaten Sadam Ali by ninth-round knockout. Vargas won the vacant WBO title.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Pacquiao UD; Fischer – Pacquiao UD; Harty – Pacquiao UD; Abramson – Pacquiao UD

SERGEY KOVALEV VS. ANDRE WARD

Date: Nov. 19
Location: Las Vegas
Division: Light heavyweights (for Kovalev's IBF, WBA and WBO titles)
RING Ratings: Kovalev No. 1, Ward No. 5
TV: HBO Pay-Per-View
Watchability rating (up to five stars): ★★★★★
Significance: Kovalev (30-0-1, 26 KOs) has been one of the hottest boxers the past two years, although Isaac Chilemba gave him more trouble than expected in a unanimous-decision victory in July. Ward (30-0, 15 KOs) has fought only four times since 2012, when he ruled the 168-division, because of promotional issues and injuries. This is his chance to re-establish himself.
Prediction: Rosenthal – Ward UD; Fischer – Kovalev UD; Harty – Ward UD; Abramson – Kovalev SD

NOV. 4 – L.A. Fight Club, Los Angeles (RingTVLive.com and Estrella TV).
NOV. 26 – Anthony Joshua vs. TBA, heavyweights (for Joshua's IBF title), Manchester, England (Showtime).

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SECOND BEST

Harry Wills and Luis Angel Firpo, who tower over their handlers in this classic photo (Wills at left), had already attained fame when they met in 1924 but both would finish their careers with an empty feeling. Wills, a product of New Orleans, was among a group of gifted African-Americans who were denied a chance to fight for world championships because of the color of their skin. He came close. He and then-heavyweight champ Jack Dempsey, the best heavyweights in the early 1920s, agreed at one point to tangle but the fight fell apart over money. Wills got the better of the crude Firpo but he would lose three consecutive fights from 1926 to 1929 and then fade away. Firpo's most memorable moment came against Dempsey the previous year. The overmatched "Wild Bull of the Pampas" went down seven times in the first round but then, out of nowhere, knocked the champ through the ropes and out of the ring. Alas, Dempsey managed to scramble back into the ring – with help from ringsiders and possibly beyond an actual count of 10 – and stop Firpo in Round 2. The Argentine never did much after that but remained an icon in his country.

By Lamar Clark

FOR BOXING AFICIONADOS ONLY

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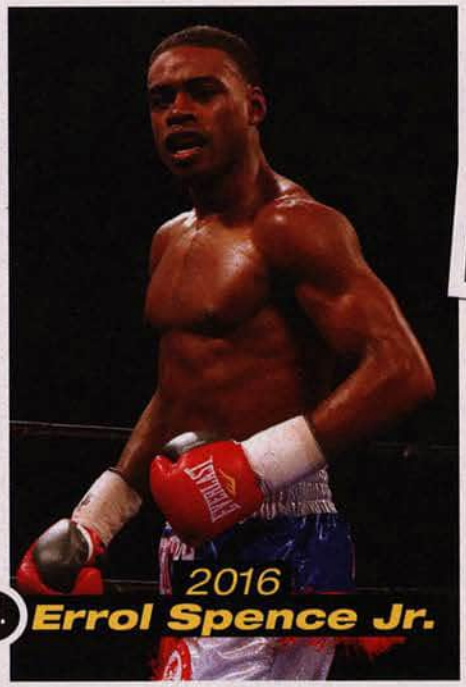
2000
Shane Mosley

VS.



2016
Errol Spence Jr.

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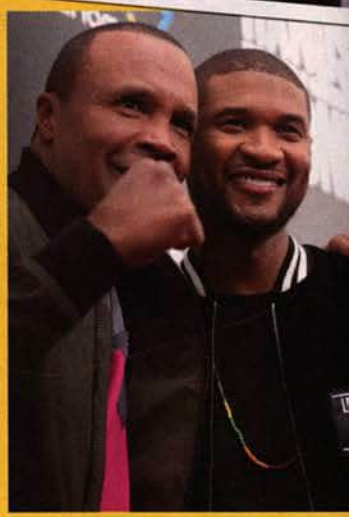
SEPT. 7, 1971	BORN	JAN. 13, 1990
LYNWOOD, CALIFORNIA	BIRTHPLACE	LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK
SUGAR	ALIAS	THE TRUTH
ORTHODOX	STANCE	SOUTHPAW
49-10-1 (41 KOs)	CAREER RECORD	21-0 (18 KOs)
68 PERCENT	KO RATE	86 PERCENT
71 INCHES	REACH	72 INCHES

STYLES MAKE FIGHTS



The red carpet was packed with stars and champions in New York City for the premiere of "Hands of Stone." That included legendary boxers Roberto Duran, played by Edgar Ramirez (top), and Sugar Ray Leonard, played by Usher Raymond (above).

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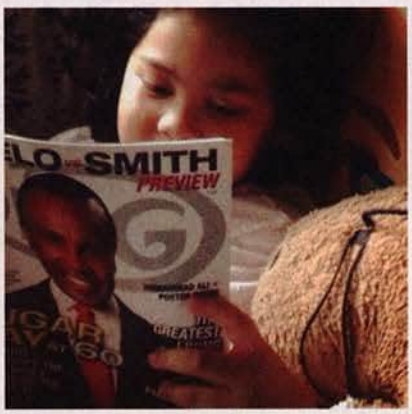

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